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**HYPOCHONDRIACK**



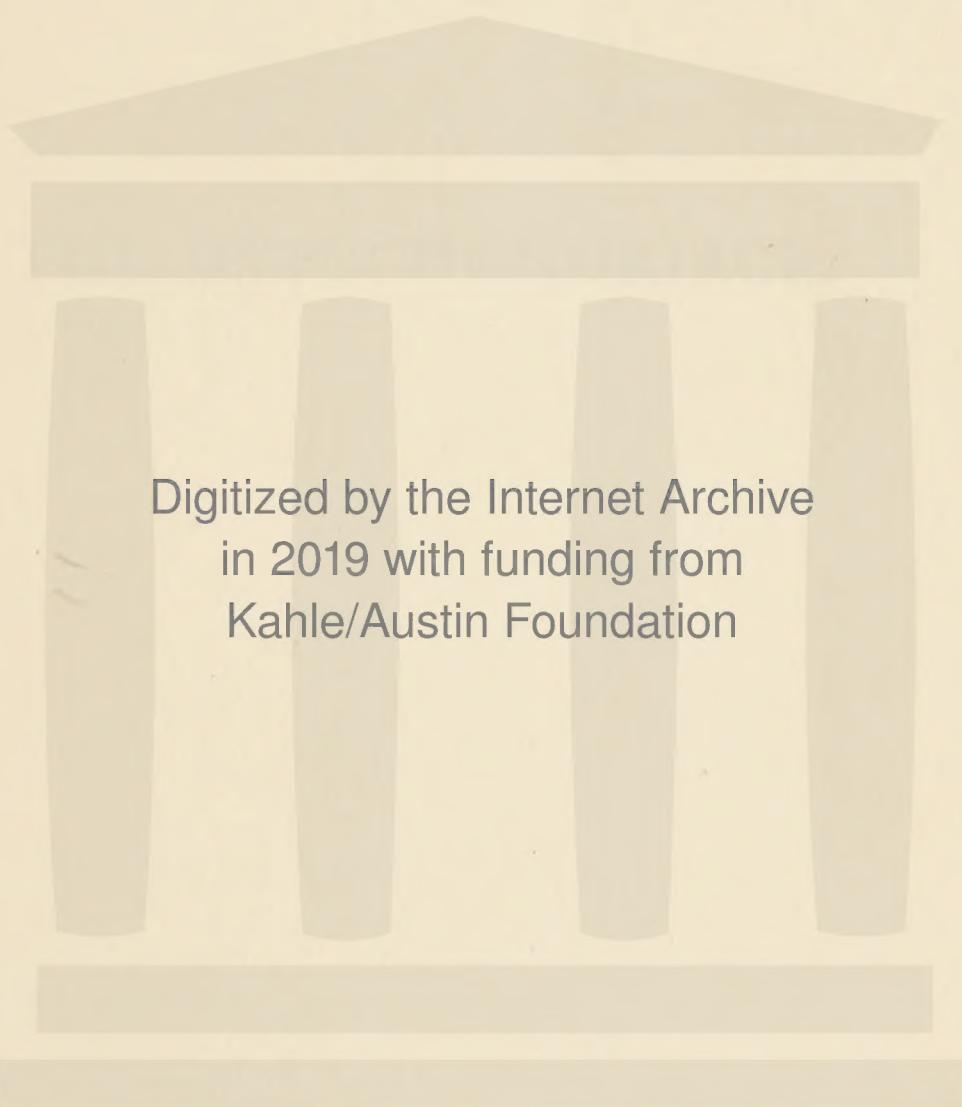
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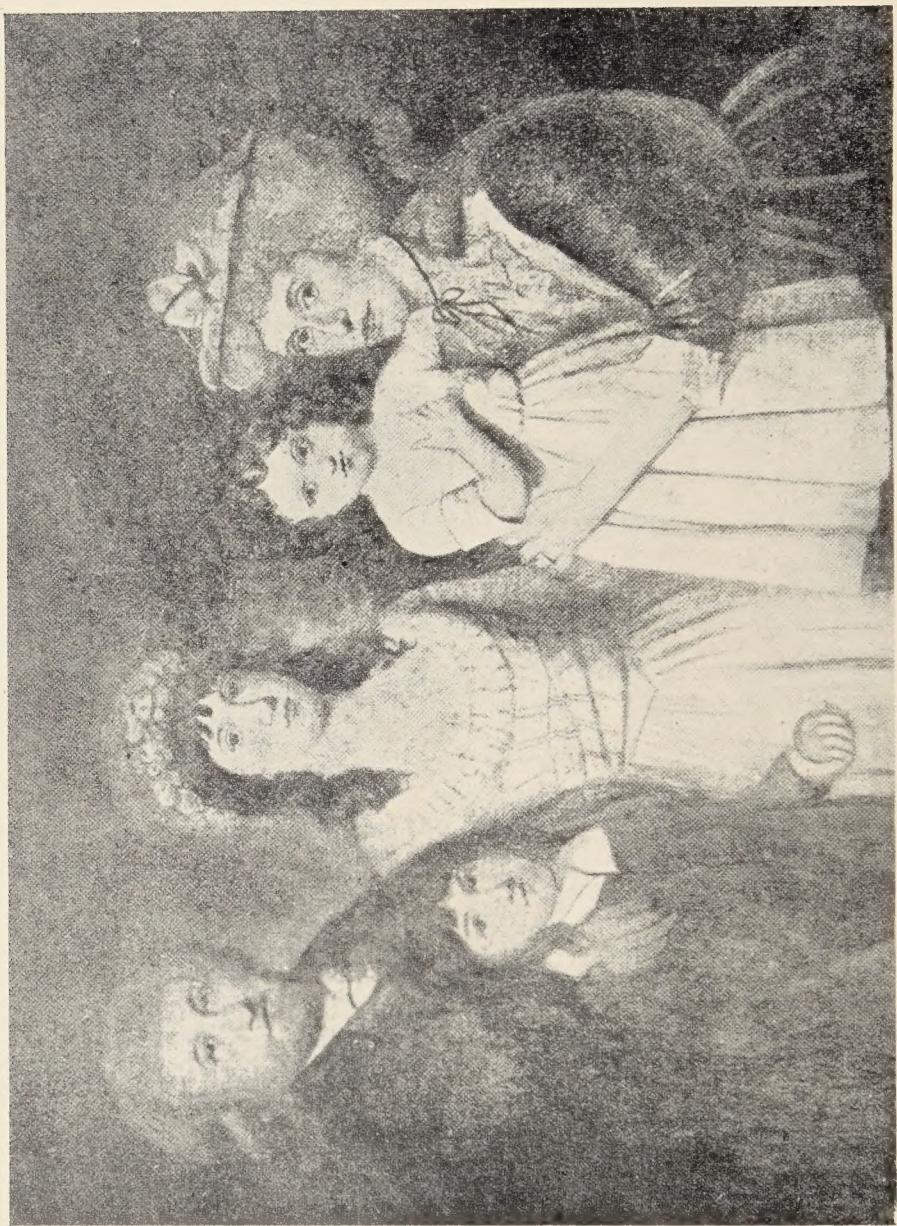
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# THE HYPOCHONDRIACK.







From the painting by Henry Singleton, R.A.

*Boswell and His Family*

# *The* **HYPOCHONDRIACK**

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Being the Seventy Essays by the celebrated biographer,  
JAMES BOSWELL, appearing in the LONDON MAGAZINE,  
from November, 1777, to August, 1783, and here first Reprinted.

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VOLUME II



STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

1928

PR 3325 . A7 1928 v. 2

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FIRST EDITION

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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## THE HYPOCHONDRIACK.



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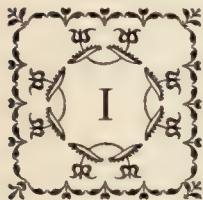
# THE HYPOCHONDRIACK.

No. XXXIV. July 1780.

## [ON DISPUTATION]

*Disputantem contra se magis docere quam vincere.*—ST. JEROME.

“In disputing with any one, he wished rather to instruct than to overcome.”



T IS the fashion with some people to talk with disrespect of the ancient Fathers of the church. But this must be owing either to ignorance or want of candour; or, to express myself in milder terms, to their not being acquainted with the writings of these holy sages, or having a prejudice against them because they are holy.

When a man has duly considered any proposition, and feels his mind firmly settled with regard to it, he may pronounce his opinion with a decent confidence; nay, I think it is his duty to do so; for to borrow one of the sentences of our copy-books at the writing-school, “Zeal in a good cause is commendable;” and that cause is good to a man, which appears to him to be good, after a fair enquiry. Truth would not be established upon a solid basis were men indifferent in maintaining their opinions.

I therefore avow myself to be one who venerates the Fathers, in whom, though there<sup>1</sup> are to be sure peculiarities, and even sometimes what seem to be weaknesses, I find an elevation of thought, and a mild propriety, which cannot fail to edify every one who is willing to be improved. *Pere Bouhours*, the French critick, has collected and published a pocket volume of their aphorisms, under the title of *Pensées Ingenieuses des Peres de L'Église*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Originally *they*; corrected by Boswell's note, which was printed at the end of *Hyp.* 35.

<sup>2</sup> Dominique Bouhours (1628–1702), S.J. Originally the name was printed *Bonhours*, and left without correction by Boswell. The title of the work by this grammarian and *bel esprit*, also, is not only incorrectly accented but incorrectly stated: it appeared in 1700 as *Pensées ingénieuses de l'Église*. Bouhours is praised by Dr. Johnson (*Life of J.*, 2. 103), and mentioned in *The Spectator*, 62.

The motto of this paper is a part of the excellent character which *St. Jerome* has drawn of *Nepotien*, nephew of *Heliodorus* the Bishop. It is indeed a panegyrick presented to an uncle of high dignity after the death of a nephew in holy orders, who is represented as having attained to an uncommon degree of perfection. I am however inclined to receive it as just. Perhaps one is in some measure influenced by the striking and solemn views which the painters have upon every occasion given us of *St. Jerome*. But the sanctity of his manners, and the weight of his writings, must ever give authority to every thing which we are sure has come from his pen.

The habit of disputing with good temper, and a wish rather to instruct than overcome, which *St. Jerome* ascribes to *Nepotien*, is perhaps as rare a quality as is to be found;<sup>3</sup> and for want of this there can be no doubt that mankind do not make near so good a progress in knowledge and virtue as they otherwise might do.

Pride and vanity, open or disguised, have such a predominance in almost every human being, that a dispute is for the most part a contest for superiority, which ends in resentment. Without making allowance for different opportunities of acquiring information, and different degrees of application to particular studies, which may be accidental, and imply no advantage in one man over another, people who view a subject in different lights are apt to take an instant alarm, as if their judgement and understanding were called in question.

Instances of this are so frequent, that I am persuaded none of my readers will deny the justice of the remark; for, indeed the violence of disputation is not confined to those who have knowledge or judgement to decide upon subjects or consequences; but it is to be found amongst the most ignorant and stupid. Accordingly, the phrase for scolding is taken from those whom I had

<sup>3</sup> Such mildness was the exact opposite of Dr. Johnson's usual methods of argument (see the concluding paragraphs of this essay), but on one occasion he was induced to follow the example of *Nepotien* (*Hebr.*, 369):

Speaking of [Dr. Campbell] . . . . he told us, that he one day called on him, and they talked of Tull's *Husbandry*. Dr. Campbell said something. Dr. Johnson began to dispute it. "Come, (said Dr. Campbell,) we do not want to get the better of one another: we want to increase each other's ideas." Dr. Johnson took it in good part, and the conversation then went on coolly and instructively. His candor in relating this anecdote does him much credit, and his conduct on that occasion proves how easily he could be persuaded to talk from a better motive than "for victory."

almost called brutish animals in human shape, the fishwomen; and so we talk of *Billingsgate language*.

Where subjects have been treated in the form of dialogue, as in *Dialogues of the Dead*, or in dialogues between imaginary persons,<sup>4</sup> we find that calmness of temper, which would be so admirable in disputants.

For in these performances one person dictates all that is said, and as he takes care that his own opinion shall prevail, he is only pleased with his own ingenuity, while he raises arguments against it. We cannot to be sure expect altogether such a calmness where different persons are really concerned; yet I should think there might be a great deal more, if people were sufficiently attentive.

An acquiescent disposition, which makes people from that politeness which is calculated merely for ease, be willing to allow whatever is said in company to pass without any enquiry or animadversion whatever, is not a disposition which will lead to much intellectual improvement. But the *manner* of enquiring and animadverting is what I am now considering.

A certain degree of pride and vanity, or such an opinion of one's self as produces an unwillingness to be insulted even by acknowledged superiority, is a laudable spirit; and there is therefore no reason to blame those who cannot bear to have their opinions treated with contempt. There is a lawful resistance in the mind of man against the tyranny of his fellow creatures in every way, though he may be willing to yield to authority, as is humorously said in the play, we do not like to do any thing "upon *compulsion*."<sup>5</sup> An appearance of haughty force will make us refuse even what is agreeable. There is a good story told of a gentleman, who, without any harshness<sup>6</sup> of temper had unluckily much of it in his

<sup>4</sup> Boswell alludes to the *Dialogues of the Dead* by George, first Lord Lyttelton (see *Hyp.* 13 for biographical note). Johnson in his biography of this author dates them *ca.* 1754, and says that they

were very eagerly read, though the production rather . . . . of leisure than of study; rather effusions than compositions. The names of his persons too often enable the reader to anticipate their conversation; and when they have met, they too often part without any conclusion. He has copied Fénelon more than Fontenelle.

<sup>5</sup> Falstaff's phrase, in *1 H. IV*, 2. 4. 261. The sentence structure here is typically Boswellian; see the concluding sentence of this essay, and *Hyp.* 59 n. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Originally *happiness*; corrected by Boswell's note, printed at the end of *Hyp.* 35.

voice and tone, and manner. One day at dinner, with a stern look, and brandishing his knife and fork, he called out, “*Who won’t eat roast beef?*” Another worthy gentleman who was one of the company, and took this to be a defiance and threatening, answered with a determined self-satisfaction, “*I won’t.*”—“Well then, sir (said the other) will you please to have some mutton?”

It is thus in opinions. A man may be exceedingly well inclined to learn and very open to conviction. But he will not have a proposition crammed down his throat; and therefore, those who have it sincerely at heart, that their opinions should be received by others would do well to consider how necessary it is to study the art of conciliation, and like that eminent divine whom St. Jerome celebrates, to wish to instruct rather than to overcome.

The desire of overcoming is not only an obstruction to the propagation of truth, but contributes to disseminate error. A Goliah in argument will take the wrong side merely to display his prowess, and though he may not warp his own understanding, which is sometimes the case, he will probably confound that of weaker men.<sup>7</sup> It has been said of some of the most pernicious

<sup>7</sup> This whole essay seems to be the result of feelings lacerated in verbal combat, and in this paragraph particularly, suggests that it was Johnson who caused the wounds. Throughout the *Life of J.* it is clear that Johnson considered conversation a contest (*Life of J.*, 2. 516), that he had a strong spirit of contradiction (*ibid.*, 4. 495; *Hebr.*, 94, 252), that he stunned people by the force of his statements or argument (*Life of J.*, 3. 304, 437; 4. 193, 340; *Hebr.*, 328). Most notable are the numerous comments on his arguing on any side about any thing, for victory only (*Life of J.*, 2. 121; 4. 129, 495). Boswell usually excuses his hero, but on occasion expresses himself with a candor which shows that the feeling betrayed in this essay was not far distant; cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 27:

The truth, however, is, that he loved to display his ingenuity in argument; and therefore would sometimes in conversation maintain opinions which he was sensible were wrong, but in supporting which, his reasoning and wit would be most conspicuous. He would begin thus: “Why, Sir, as to the good or evil of card-playing—” “Now, (said Garrick,) he is thinking which side he shall take.” He appeared to have a pleasure in contradiction, especially when any opinion whatever was delivered with an air of confidence; so that there was hardly any topic, if not one of the great truths of Religion and Morality, that he might not have been incited to argue, either for or against.

See also the conversation on medicated baths, in which “one of the company” (probably Boswell himself) upheld the good effect of “warm water . . . impregnated with salutiferous substances” (*ibid.*, 2. 115):

This appeared to me very satisfactory. Johnson did not answer it; but talking for victory, and determined to be master of the field, he had recourse to the device which Goldsmith imputed to him in the witty words of one of Cibber’s comedies: “There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it.” He turned

perverters of human opinion, that their motive was to show their talents in sophistry. They might with less guilt have shown their dexterity in stealing.

How agreeable and improving would the conversation of well-informed and thinking persons be, if their constant wish were the benevolent purpose of instructing. If instead of rudely or cunningly endeavouring to extinguish one another's lights, they would fairly join them, and thus at once illuminate themselves, and diffuse knowledge to all around them.

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to the gentlemen. "Well, Sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated; but be sure that the steam be directed to thy *head*, for that is the *peccant part*." This produced a triumphant roar of laughter from the motley assembly of philosophers, printers, and dependents, male and female.

That last sentence might have been written by Macaulay rather than by the adoring Boswell; and it is remarkable that the disgruntled quotation by Goldsmith is quoted twice elsewhere in full (*Life of J.*, 4. 316 and *Hebr.*, 332). For other comments, and instances of Johnson's power as a Goliah, see *Life of J.*, 2. 75, 222; 3. 384; 4. 214, 364 n. 3; *Letters of B.*, 1. 245; *Hebr.*, 15, 17, 86, 246, 287, 305, 369, 441, 452.

No. XXXV. Aug. 1780.

## [ON IMITATION]

*Se abunde similes putent, si vitia magnorum consequantur.*—QUINTILIAN.<sup>1</sup>

“They think themselves sufficiently like eminent men, if they have acquired their faults.”

**A**MONGST the many excellent instructions which Quintillian gives for attaining to eloquence, there is none more necessary than a caution to avoid the faults of great orators.

Man is acknowledged by all the writers upon human nature, to be an animal exceedingly given to imitation. Indeed, he has that faculty, perhaps, in as eminent a degree of superiority, when compared with other animals, as he has any faculty whatever. And hence it is amongst other concurring reasons, that he is capable of learning with so much more facility, a great deal of what is taught.

But as faults are in general more striking to observation, and more easy to be imitated than perfections, there is continual danger that they may be propagated. Quintillian therefore desires his readers to advert that every thing in the oratory of those who are upon the whole great men, is not great; and then he censures those of which there have been too many in every age and country, who think themselves sufficiently like eminent men, if they have acquired their faults.

To imitation of distinguished persons, we must ascribe what is called *fashion*, by which such a variety of modes in dress, behaviour, and numberless other respects, hath been successfully established. In no other way can we account for fashion. The maxim is *Quot homines tot sententiae*, “As many men as many minds.”<sup>2</sup> And this is certainly true as to opinions and inclinations. Yet there is an uniformity in fashion, which could not happen without there being one original model after which all have copied. There is very seldom any authority or order of state for any fashion. We indeed see from time to time in the London Gazette very particular orders announced as to court mournings. In some countries all the citizens are commanded to wear black,

<sup>1</sup> *De Inst. Orat.*, 10. 1. 25. Note Boswell's irregular spellings of *Quintilian*.

<sup>2</sup> Terence, *Phormio*, 2. 4. 14.

by way of a sumptuary law, to prevent luxury in dress.<sup>3</sup> The British legislature at one time thought it wise and necessary to order the Highlanders of Scotland to wear breeches, and a prohibition against slouched hats and long cloaks was not long ago issued in Spain.<sup>4</sup> But a few such instances are nothing in the multitude of fashions which have taken place with an exactness as universal as if they had been enforced by the severest penalties.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 8 and notes. On the general observance of court mournings, see *Life of J.*, 4. 375: Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* was to be first presented on March 15, 1773 (during the period of mourning for the King of Sardinia, who had died on February 20), and the author's friends were to celebrate the occasion together. Dr. Johnson had dressed for the evening

in coloured cloaths; yet being told that he would find every one else in black, received the intelligence with a profusion of thanks, hastened to change his attire, all the while repeating his gratitude for the information that had saved him from an appearance so improper in the front row of a box. "I would not, (added he,) for ten pounds, have seemed so retrograde to any general observance."

Birkbeck Hill adds an amusing note from Hannah More's *Memoirs*, I. 170, upon her embarrassment at a public assembly when "the mourning for some foreign Wilhelmina Jaquelina was not over. Every human creature was in deep mourning, and I, poor I, all gorgeous in scarlet. Even Jacobite Johnson was in deep mourning."

<sup>4</sup> Both of these measures were political—the result of the Stuart uprisings in England, and of the wars of the French succession in Spain. A movement in the British Parliament to abolish Highland dress was begun as early as 1725, but nothing came of it at that time. After the rebellion of 1745 three suppressive acts were passed, the abolition of Highland dress sharing importance with the disarming act and the act to abolish feudal claims to military service among the Scots lords. The importance of the plaids, worn as kilts or philabegs, was that the tartan, identifying the clan to which a man belonged, served to indicate the feudal connection, and thus became a mark of military division. Most of the Scots histories agree that the dress had been a haphazard choice before this act, but that defiance created the conventional adherence to it. The penalties for wearing the philabeg were much the same as those for carrying arms—six months' imprisonment for the first offense, and a heavy fine or exile to the colonies for the second. The act was repealed in 1782.

Like the Scots, the Spanish had long worn the prohibited dress, but without any feeling for it as a national costume until the long cloak and slouched hat were accepted as symbols of opposition to clothing of either French or military cut. From 1716 to 1745 various laws prohibited the wearing of these garments, chiefly on the ridiculous grounds that suspicious characters could too easily muffle themselves in such apparel and hide their faces; the law of 1745 stated that the council considered the long cloak a deliberately assumed disguise. As late as 1766, however, reform had not taken place, and the minister Esquilache, who attempted to change the accepted national style by force, fell before public

Some fashions bear the names of those who first introduced them; as in our own time, we can trace the *Pompadour* and *Barré* colours,<sup>5</sup> from the mistresses of the king of France; and the *Nivernois* and *Kevenhuller* hats, from the French ambassador and German minister.<sup>6</sup> But for the most part, the origin of fashions, like that of nations, is hid in the obscurity of forgetfulness. There can, however, be no doubt, that every fashion has had its first example, which has been imperceptibly imitated, till

opinion. His successor, the Count of Aranda, attained the desired end by causing the slouched hat to be worn by the hangman as part of his regulation costume; in a short time the small three-cornered French hat was being worn by society in general.

<sup>5</sup> Not separate colors, but one delicate pink, first used in making Sèvres pottery by Xzrowet in 1757. It was originally named for Mme de Pompadour, whose favorite color it was; after her death it was transferred to the patronage of Mme du Barry. The best specimens of rose-colored pottery were made between 1757 and 1764, the last years of the Pompadour's life. See Jacquemart, *History of the Ceramic Art*; Marryat, *A History of Pottery and Porcelain, Mediaeval and Modern*.

<sup>6</sup> The Kevenhuller was a very large cocked hat much affected by military men and swaggering characters in the decade 1750-60; it was turned up sharply from the face, so that it gave somewhat the effect of a huge crown, and was decorated with a rosette or large loop and button. According to the poem *The Art of Dressing the Hair* (1770), the name was derived not from an ambassador but from a soldier:

When Anna ruled, and Kevenhuller fought,—  
The hat its title from the Hero caught.

He was Louis Andrew, Count Khevenhuller (b. 1683), who served with distinction under Prince Eugene, became a field-marshall, and succeeded to several of the Prince's offices upon the death of Eugene.

The Nivernois, very fashionable about 1765-1770, was an exceedingly small cocked hat, the corner worn in front pointed sharply forward in spout or shovel shape, and stiffened by wire; the brim was narrow, the flaps turned up and fastened by hooks and eyes a little below the top of the shallow crown. It was named for Louis-Jules Barbon Mancini-Mazarini, Duc de Nivernais (1716-1798), a man evidently of great personal charm. He began his career in the army of France, and served successively as ambassador to Rome, to Berlin, and to England; it was largely due to his efforts that the treaty of peace after the Seven Years War was signed in London in 1763. In spite of his delicate position on this occasion, he was very popular in England, and left there an exalted opinion of his character and his abilities. Lord Chesterfield recommends the Duke as a model in his *Letters*, and alludes to him as "one of the prettiest men I ever knew in my life" (*Lord Chesterfield's Letters*, 1. 222; 3. 1285). See also *Boswelliana*, 316.

it has reigned with one consent, as if by the fixed influence of nature.

As fashion, therefore, or imitation, can make what is of itself ugly or disagreeable, become artificially beautiful or pleasing, there is no wonder that every circumstance which we can perceive in eminent persons should be imitated. To make a distinction between what is worthy of imitation, and what is not, requires taste and judgement, and a strict attention.<sup>7</sup>

We are told that the courtiers of Alexander the Great were at most assiduous pains to imitate their sovereign's deformity in having a wry neck; and that accordingly they all appeared with their heads almost laid close upon one shoulder. After what we know authentically of different nations disfiguring their children, by making their lips thick and their noses flat, and producing many such perversions of the human frame, by way of improving it, we may conceive it possible, that a wry neck might, from the veneration for a monarch almost reckoned a *god*, be thought graceful. If that was not the case, it seems not a little strange how an absolute imperfection in Alexander should have been perpetually placed before his eyes in multiplied examples without offending him. One should think that nothing could irritate a man more than to be constantly reminded of an incurable defect; and accordingly it has been reckoned great cruelty to imitate such defects. *Churchill*, in his *Rosciad*, points out the distress strongly, supposing himself to be placed in such an exhibition:

“Beneath a load of mimickry may groan,  
And find that Nature’s errors are my own.”<sup>8</sup>

In literary composition, the faults of celebrated writers are adopted, because they appear the most prominent objects to vulgar

<sup>7</sup> The phrasing of this sentence was originally printed, *To make a distinction between of what is worthy . . . and what is not*, and was left unaltered by Boswell. The subsequent anecdote of Alexander's wry neck appears also in *The Spectator*, 32:

Alexander the Great wore his head a little over his left shoulder, and then not a soul stirred out till he had adjusted his neck-bone; the whole nobility addressed the prince and each other obliquely, and all matters of importance were concerted and carried on in the Macedonian court, with their polls on one side.

<sup>8</sup> Boswell quotes imperfectly from memory 11.407–408 of the *Rosciad*; the first line reads in the original, “Beneath *the* load of mimickry . . .”

and undiscerning men, who would fain participate of fame like theirs by imitating their manner. The Spectator gives a very good instance of imitating Shakespeare only in such an instance as "And so good morrow t'ye, good Master Lieutenant;" and having done so, imagining that there was a general likeness.<sup>9</sup> And all of us might by attentive observation discover imitations not much more deserving of the fame of excellence than what is thus so humorously quoted.

How many writers have made themselves ridiculous by dull imitation of the sudden sallies of fancy and unconnected breaks of sentiment in Sterne? How many pigmy geniuses have, like the frog in the fable, that burst itself by vainly thinking it could swell to the size of an ox, become contemptible by aping the great style of the modern colossus of literature.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Boswell is in error here, as he is in a letter to Temple in 1775 (*Letters of B.*, I. 219-20):

Do you remember how I used to laugh at his style when we were in the Temple? He thinks himself an ancient Greek from these little peculiarities, as the imitators of Shakespeare whom the Spectator mentions, thought they had done wonderfully when they produced a line similar to

And so good morrow to ye good Master Lieutenant.

See Birkbeck Hill's note (*Life of J.*, 2. 258 n. 4): "It is not in *The Spectator*, but in [Swift's] *Martinus Scriblerus* [his *Treatise of the Art of Sinking in Poetry*] chap. ix . . . that the imitators of Shakespeare are ridiculed." Dr. Tinker adds, in a note to the letter cited above, that the offending imitator in this instance was Rowe, from whose *Lady Jane Gray* Swift took the line to ridicule.

<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, the Great Cham of Literature—Johnson. In the *Life of J.*, 4. 445 ff., Boswell discusses imitators of Johnson's style, but the only person to whom the comment of this essay applies clearly is a Reverend Dr. Knox, one of whose *Essays Moral and Literary* Boswell criticizes as "blown up into such tumidity as to be truly ludicrous." Gibbon, whom Boswell detested, is mentioned in the same discussion, but with respect; other writers who seriously attempted to imitate Johnson's style without calling down Boswell's aspersions were Miss Burney, Dr. Robertson (author of the *History of America* which Boswell quoted in *Hyp.* 32), a Reverend Mr. Burrowes, a Reverend Mr. Nares, and two anonymous essayists, supposed to be Professor Young of Glasgow and Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*. (See also Johnson's own remarks about his imitators, in which he mentions Mrs. Barbauld with approbation—*Life of J.*, 3. 196.)

Boswell discusses caricatures of Johnson's style in the *Life of J.*, 2. 50, 416; 3. 195-96; 4. 447; and in *Hebr.*, 310. For imitations of Johnson's manner see *Life of J.*, 2. 374 n. 1.

But it is not only in literary composition and in *manners*, or external behaviour in lesser particulars, that there is a propensity to imitate the faults of eminent men. There is a much more serious danger, when it is considered how ready we are to imitate even their vices: not that we are ever so blinded by appetite and passion, as directly to believe even for a moment that their vices are not criminal. But we are apt to indulge ourselves in immoralities which we find the world disposed to overlook in eminent men, without reflecting that we have not the great qualities by which such vices are counterbalanced; and that even if it were so, the eminence of character which we admire is to a certain degree diminished and stained by them.<sup>11</sup>

This delusive propensity to imitate the vices of eminent men, makes it a question of some difficulty in biography, whether their faults should be recorded.<sup>12</sup> We have indeed the high example of

<sup>11</sup> Contrast this to *Hyp.* 30, and Boswell's remarks on Isaac Browne in *Hebr.*, 177-78.

<sup>12</sup> The conclusion of this essay seems to be a cento of several conversations between Boswell and Johnson; cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 175-76 (1777):

Talking of biography, I said, in writing a life, a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character. JOHNSON. "Sir, there is no doubt as to the peculiarities; the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely: for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth." Here was an instance of his varying from himself in talk; for when Lord Hailes and he sat one morning calmly conversing in my house at Edinburgh, I well remember that Dr. Johnson maintained, that "If a man is to write *A Panegyrick*, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write *A Life*, he must represent it really as it was"; and when I objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, he said, "that it would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it." And in the Hebrides he maintained, as appears from my *Journal*, that a man's intimate friend should mention his faults, if he writes his life.

See also *ibid.*, 3. 258:

I talked of some time or other publishing this curious life [of Sir Robert Sibbald, who left a candid self-revelation behind him]. MRS. THRALE. "I think you had as well let alone that publication. To discover such weakness, exposes a man when he is gone." JOHNSON. "Nay, it is an honest picture of human nature."

Cf. *Hebr.* 271, where Johnson maintains that it is not wrong to expose the faults of an intimate friend after he is dead—"for then it is done historically."

The authority of the Scriptures which Boswell offers may also have come from Johnson, although Boswell himself makes no record of any such remarks. The only complete reference to the subject occurs in a signed statement from Malone, as if Boswell felt that he could not vouch for it; however, the fact indicates in all probability Boswell's usual desire for authenticity in a matter on

holy writ, where we find the errors and crimes even of saints and martyrs fairly and freely related. But we ought not to assimilate ordinary human compositions to what carries a reverential awe. And notwithstanding that, it is to be feared that there have been too many instances of people offending under the mistaken sanction of scriptural history. At the same time, truth is sacred, and real characters should be known. I am therefore of opinion, that a biographer should tell even the imperfections and faults of those whose lives he writes, provided that he takes a conscientious care not to blend them with the general lustre of excellence, but to distinguish and separate them, and impress upon his readers a just sense of the evil, so that they may regret its being found in such men, and be anxiously disposed to avoid what hurts even the most exalted characters, but would utterly sink men of ordinary merit.

which he had not kept exact notes, rather than ignorance of Johnson's opinion. Malone's notes occur in the *Life of J.*, 4. 62:

"I then mentioned to him that some people thought Mr. Addison's character was so pure, that the fact [of his dunning Steele for a debt] *though true*, ought to have been suppressed. He saw no reason for this. 'If nothing but the bright side of characters should be shewn, we should sit down in despondency, and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in *any thing*. The sacred writers, (he observed,) related the vicious as well as the virtuous actions of men; which had this moral effect, that it kept mankind from *despair*, into which otherwise they would naturally fall, were they not supported by the recollection that others had offended like themselves, and by penitence and amendment of life had been restored to the favour of Heaven.'

"March 15, 1782.

"E. M."

Boswell may have had his own great work in mind throughout all these discussions; certainly he uses these notes of Malone to justify his practice in biography. He says directly after the quoted passage, "The last paragraph of this note is of great importance; and I request that my readers may consider it with particular attention. It will afterwards be referred to in this work." He uses it later on (*Life of J.*, 4. 456) to introduce his delicate allusions to Johnson's loose habits when first living in London, making a distinct reference in a foot-note to the passage quoted here.

No. XXXVI. Sept. 1780.

[ON COUNTRY LIFE]

*En iterum me rura vocant dulcesque recessus.*—AMALTHEI Eclog.<sup>1</sup>

“Again the country’s soft retreats invite.”

WHATEVER disputes there may be amongst antiquarians, politicians, or philosophers, as to the original state of man, it is clear that the country life was before the city life. In none of the numerous fantastical conjectures has it ever been figured, that a city upon this globe was eternal, or was even coeval with the creation. All have agreed in believing, that the human race existed first in the open fields. The progress has probably been too regularly traced in every book upon the subject, where we find *first* the state of hunting and fishing; *secondly*, the state of pasturage; *thirdly*, the state of agriculture; and *fourthly*, the state of commerce, with all the concomitant circumstances of art and civilization.—All theories, or systems, will, I believe, be found more regular than reality.

The happiness of a country life has been fondly exhibited in a wonderful variety of beautiful description by the poets, and other writers of warm imagination. Virgil exclaims,

*O fortunati nimium sua si bona norunt  
Agricolæ—<sup>2</sup>*

“O happy if he knew his happy state,  
The swain—”

DRYDEN.

Why they should be too happy, as it is in the original, though Dryden has omitted it, I do not well see; but it is plain they are not so; for they have not the requisite which Virgil himself admits to be necessary; to wit, a consciousness of the good things in their possession. The truth is, that the happiness of a country life has

<sup>1</sup> The opening line of *Coridon*, the third Eclogue by Johann. Baptista Amaltheus.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell misquotes the *Georgics*, 2. 458:

*O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,  
Agricolas; quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,  
Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus.*

Temple used this quotation in congratulating Boswell on his married happiness, to Boswell’s great indignation (*Letters of B.*, 1. 180).

been pictured by those who have not always enjoyed it; and I have a notion is not so much in the country itself as in change and by comparison. The source of it, however expanded and diversified, is all contained in the fine passage of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:<sup>3</sup>

"As one who long in populous city pent,  
Where houses thick, and sewers annoy the air,  
Forth issuing on a summer's morn, to breathe  
Among the pleasant villages and farms,  
Adjoin'd from each thing met, conceives delight:  
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,  
Or dairy; each rural sight, each rural sound."

The innocent pleasures of the senses, and mere tranquillity of mind, may be enjoyed more perfectly in the country than in the town; and therefore they, who are satiated and jaded, and sigh for *repose*, delight their fancies with rural felicity. But animated intellectual pleasure must be sought in cities; that is, amongst numbers of people assembled together, and having their powers and faculties excited by the vivifying motives of gain, ambition, emulation, and every thing else, by which we find man urged on to extraordinary exertions and attainments.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Book 9, lines 445 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Boswell's response to the old gentleman who "expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country" (*Life of J.*, 3. 344)—"I have no notion of this, Sir. What you have to entertain you is, I think, exhausted in half an hour." Johnson, although he administered discipline to Boswell occasionally because of his "gust for London," agreed with the feeling which this and the following essays show; see *Hyp.* 37, 38, 58, and notes; *Hebr.*, 14, 347; *Life of J.*, 2. 152; 3. 201, 430. His most apposite remarks are these:

Johnson was much attached to London; he observed, that a man stored his mind better there, than any where else; and that in remote situations a man's body might be feasted, but his mind was starved, and his faculties apt to degenerate, from want of exercise and competition. (*Ibid.*, 3. 138—*Collectanea of Maxwell*.)

"Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." (*Ibid.*, 3. 202.)

"No wise man will go to live in the country, unless he has something to do which can be better done in the country. For instance; if he is to shut himself up for a year to study a science, it is better to look out to the fields, than to an opposite wall. . . . A great city is, to be sure, the school for studying life; and 'The proper study of mankind is man,' as Pope observes." (*Ibid.*, 3. 287.)

I observed to Dr. Johnson, that I had a most disagreeable notion of the life of country gentlemen; that I left Mr. Fraser . . . as one leaves a prisoner in a jail. Dr. Johnson said,

“The city swarms intense the public haunt,  
Full of each theme, and warm with mixt discourse.”

THOMSON.<sup>5</sup>

In some respects therefore life is better in the country; in some respects, better in town. Yet is must be allowed, that as civilization advances, towns increase; and in some nations, as in Spain, it is almost universal, that the people, from the highest to the lowest ranks, live in cities and in villages. It must also be allowed, that the descriptions of the happiness of a country life seem all to originate from a state of mind somewhat indolent, feeble, and timid; for they dwell upon freedom from the “cares of life,” which, however paradoxical it may seem in Dr. Young to say so,<sup>6</sup> are indeed “comforts” to men of active spirits—and upon quietness and security, and hearing the din of war only at a distance. The well-known passage in Horace,

*O rus quando ego te aspiciam quandoque licebit  
Nunc veterum libris nunc somno et inertibus horis  
Ducere sollicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.*

“And oft with fervent wish repeat,  
When shall I see my sweet retreat!  
Oh! when with books of sages deep,  
Sequester’d ease, and gentle sleep,  
In sweet oblivion, blissful balm,  
The busy cares of life becalm,”

FRANCIS.<sup>7</sup>

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that I was right in thinking them unhappy; for that they had not enough to keep their minds in motion. (*Hebr.*, 122.)

Comparable to this is Boswell’s reflection (*ibid.*, 181), “I was happy when tea came. . . . Meals are wished for from the cravings of vacuity of mind, as well as from the desire of eating.” He may have been thinking of *Rasselas*, chap. 2, or *The Adventurer*, 102, in which the opinion is expressed that, in any monotonous situation, one wishes for meals in order to have something to think about.

In *The Adventurer*, 126 (unsigned), lovers of solitude are asserted to be persons who want to gratify or soothe their own passions of pride, envy, or disappointed idealism. See also *The Spectator*, 474.

<sup>5</sup> *The Seasons (Winter)*.

<sup>6</sup> *Night Thoughts*, 2—“Life’s cares are comforts.”

<sup>7</sup> *Sat.*, 2. 6. 60. Boswell allowed this quotation to remain in the garbled state in which it first appeared, without correction—*O rus* being run together as

is the effusion of an inconstant mind, fond of change, and flying from an excess of voluptuous gaiety to serene stillness, and backwards and forwards alternately, as he fairly owns,

*Romæ Tibur amem ventosus Tibure Roman*

“Inconstant as the wind, I various rove,  
At Tibur, Rome; at Rome, I Tibur love.”

FRANCIS.<sup>8</sup>

For Horace was *one of us*—a *Hypochondriack*, without question, though blest with brilliant rays. The country appears to have relieved him at times, when exhausted and confounded by the dissipation and hurry of Rome; and there is a fine expression in his Epistle to his Steward, *Mihi me redditis agelli*, “My farm, which restores me to myself.”<sup>9</sup>

In the passage above quoted, where he wishes so eagerly for the country, it will be observed, that a mere quiescent state is his main object. Study, to be sure, has a share, but sleep and idleness compose two parts of the happy life.

I remember having endeavoured seriously to maintain in conversation, many years ago, against a writer of some note, who is himself a prodigy, for incessant activity of mind, either in wisdom or folly, that the pleasure of pure idleness was now and then very great.<sup>10</sup> I was laughed at for this thought, and I began to fear it

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one word, and the first two words of the last line appearing as *Durere selicita*e. For a biographical note on Philip Francis, the translator, see *Hyp.* 66 n. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Epist.*, I. 8. 12. A Mr. Cambridge quoted this line of Horace in the course of conversation in 1778 (*Life of J.*, 3. 285); Boswell records his own sighing comment and Allan Ramsay’s sharp answer:

BOSWELL. “How hard is it that man can never be at rest.” RAMSAY. “It is not in his nature to be at rest. When he is at rest, he is in the worst state that he can be in; for he has nothing to agitate him. He is then like the man in the Irish song [Ally Croaker],

There liv’d a young man in Ballinacrazy,  
Who wanted a wife for to make him unaisy.”

This opinion thoroughly accorded with Boswell’s usual feeling; see *Hyp.* 25, 37. For his efforts to conquer restlessness, see *Hyp.* 64 and notes.

<sup>9</sup> *Epist.*, I. 14. 1. *Redditis* was originally given as *reddetis*; corrected by Boswell’s note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 37.

<sup>10</sup> This description does not fit Johnson, but Boswell had maintained the same notion before him, and been humorously snubbed (*Hebr.*, 330):

In the forenoon Dr. Johnson said, “it would require great resignation to live in one of these islands.” BOSWELL. “I don’t know, Sir; I have felt myself at times in a state of almost

was absurd; for a volatile flight in Horace will not bear up an opinion. I have, however, had the satisfaction to find the thought justified by the authority of Cicero, Lib. II. De Orat. *Mihi liber non videtur qui non aliquando nihil agit; in qua permaneo sententia, neque cum huc veni hoc ipsum nihil agere et plane cessare delectat.* “That man is in my mind not fully free, who is not sometimes doing nothing; of which opinion I constantly remain; and since I came to this place, I have taken a delight in just doing nothing, and, as it were, absolutely ceasing.”

But *The Hypochondriack* does not mean to limit the happiness of a country life to such unprofitable and ignoble indulgence. He has lately returned from having passed some time in the country, where in a sound and placid state of mind, he relished a rural life, and divested of prejudice, except, perhaps, what was quite unusual to him, a<sup>11</sup> little partiality in its favour; he considered the subject with a good deal of attention, and was convinced, that there are better enjoyments in the country than he had before supposed.

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mere physical existence, satisfied to eat, drink, and sleep, and walk about, and enjoy my own thoughts; and I can figure a continuation of this.” JOHNSON. “Ay, Sir; but if you were shut up here, your own thoughts would torment you. You would think of Edinburgh or London, and that you could not be there.”

See also *Hyp.* 48, in which Boswell justifies the pleasure of sleep by an argument based upon the *dolce far niente* he advocates here.

<sup>11</sup> Originally *to*; corrected by Boswell’s note, printed at the end of *Hyp.* 37.

From time to time Boswell made the effort to enjoy country life, from a wish to please his father. Cf. *Letters of B.*, I. 235:

How hard is it, that I am excluded from parental comfort. I have a mind to go to Auchinleck next autumn and try what living in a mixed stupidity of attention to country objects, and restraint from expressing my own feelings, can do with him. I allways [sic] dread his making some bad settlement. (June 1775.)

In September of the same year he wrote,

Here I am, according to my purpose. . . . I have patiently lived at it till Saturday evening. . . . You may remember how I described to Lord Lisburne the causes of my aversion to the country. It is hardly credible how difficult it is for a man of my sensibility to support existence in the family where I now am. . . . I have appeared good-humoured; but it has cost me drinking a considerable quantity of strong beer to dull my faculties. The place is greatly improved. It is really princely. I perceive some dawnings of taste for the country. I have sauntered about with my father; and he has seen that I am pleased with his works. (*Ibid.*, I. 240-41.)

In October he announced to Temple, “I will force a taste for rural beauties” (*ibid.*, I. 243). These essays show him in the act. For the most part, however, Boswell is obliged to admit as he does here that he has “little partiality” in favor of the country; see notes to *Hyp.* 38.

There is a feeling of dignity and consequence in being master of land above any thing else. It is the natural dominion of man over the earth, granted him by his Almighty Creator, and no artificial dominion is felt like it. What is the first minister of state in London, personally, when compared with a duke, or an earl, a knight, or a squire, the lord of a manor, and a proprietor of extensive domains in the country? and the comparison will hold in different gradations, between the power of men in offices, which have been framed in political society, and that influence which rises immediately and certainly out of the right to land.

He who is master of land sees all around him obedient to his will, not only can he totally change the face of inanimate nature, but can command the animals of each species, and even the human race itself, to multiply or to diminish, to continue or to migrate, according to his pleasure.<sup>12</sup> Limited as he is by our government, and our laws, he is very essentially the arbiter of happiness and unhappiness over a district; for, as is said in Goldsmith's Traveller, a poem,

Of all the ills that human hearts endure  
How small what kings and laws can cause or cure.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 19, 38, and notes, and Johnson's remarks, *Life of J.*, I. 474:

He said, "Sir, let me tell you, that to be a Scotch landlord, where you have a number of families dependent upon you, and attached to you, is, perhaps, as high a situation as humanity can arrive at. A merchant upon the 'Change of London, with a hundred thousand pounds, is nothing; an English Duke, with an immense fortune, is nothing; he has no tenants who consider themselves as under his patriarchal care, and who will follow him to the field upon an emergency."

See also *ibid.*, I. 535:

He was pleased to listen to a particular account which I gave him of my family, and of its hereditary estate, . . . . recommending, at the same time, a liberal kindness to the tenantry, as people over whom the proprietor was placed by Providence. . . .

and *ibid.*, 4. 189:

"Sir, the superiority of a country-gentleman over the people upon his estate is very agreeable; and he who says he does not feel it to be agreeable, lies; for it must be agreeable to have a casual superiority over those who are by nature equal with us."

Garrick shared the feeling after his fortunes rose; he says in a letter to Mrs. Wilmot, "I want . . . sheep to feed upon my land, and not for me to feed upon: however, a piece of mutton of my own feeding, though it be tough and tasteless, would certainly give me an importance in my neighborhood" (*Garrick Correspondence*, 2. 358).

<sup>13</sup> Boswell misquotes from memory—

How small, of all that human hearts endure,  
The part which laws or kings can cause or cure.

One should suppose, then, that there must be a want of wisdom, and of *œconomy*, in the large sense of the word, as understood by the *Greeks*, if a man, who is a proprietor of land to any considerable extent, especially if it be inhabited by any considerable number of people, is ever at a loss for occupation and amusement; the mere uniform feeling of dignity would, I am sensible, in time, grow dull, and the pleasure of it pall upon the proudest mind. But if to that feeling of dignity there is joined all that is delightful in the exercise of benevolence, one must surely enjoy a continual feast; and it must be considered that in promoting the welfare of numbers, in different situations and circumstances, there is a wide field for ingenuity and contrivance, and an inexhaustible fund of agreeable occupation. In my next paper, I shall proceed to consider the country life more particularly.

No. XXXVII. Oct. 1780.

## [ON COUNTRY LIFE—Continued]

*Nunc hujus columnæ doctrina vult nos tantum in hac studiorum ratione retinenda ponere fiduciaæ tantum spei collocare ut nos tales tantum, non prorsus et ab omni parte beatissimos existimemus.*

—VOLUSENUS, *De Anim. Tranquill.*<sup>1</sup>

“Now the doctrine of this pillar is, that in steadily pursuing our course of study, we should have such a degree of confidence and hope, as to think that we may be as well, as the present state of human nature admits, but by no means perfectly happy.”

IN CONSIDERING the country life more particularly, I shall be careful not to consider it too minutely. I wish to give an agreeable notion of it to my readers, and indeed to have an agreeable notion of it myself; and experience has taught me, that as a microscopic eye would make man suffer continual disgust while beholding the physical world around him, too prying a view of any system of life produces a dislike of it. Indeed I have remarked, that no exact detail of life from morning to night, however much the person who gave it was disposed to represent it as pleasing, had the effect to make one wish to realise it to “live o'er each scene.”<sup>2</sup> On the contrary I can say for myself, that the effect of every such detail has been to make me wonder how the daily task could be performed, and pity those who played their parts in the wearisome drama.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boswell says of this work in a letter to Johnson, 1778 (*Letters of B.*, 2. 271):

Did you ever look at a book written by Wilson, a Scotchman, under the Latin name of Volusenus, according to the custom of literary men at a certain period? It is entitled *De Animi Tranquillitate*.

Birkbeck Hill notes (*Life of J.*, 3. 244) that Florence Wilson accompanied Cardinal Wolsey's nephew to Paris as tutor, and published his *De Tranquillitate Animi Dialogus* at Lyons in 1543.

Boswell evidently depended upon the book as an agent to relieve his melancholy, which is very evident in the letter containing reference to the work.

<sup>2</sup> Pope, Prologue to Addison's *Cato*. The curious punctuation of this sentence is given as Boswell left it.

<sup>3</sup> This is part of Boswell's distaste for minute examination of anything; cf. a letter from Boswell to Temple, 1775 (*Letters of B.*, 1. 246):

While writing upon the country life, I am in a situation quite different from that of *Horace*, when he says, *Virginibus puerisque canto*, “I sing to maidens and youths.”<sup>4</sup> The young and the gay, whose spirits are light and airy, have no need of being furnished with any counsels for keeping their minds easy; and I should as soon think of writing to the birds as to them. Neither is my essay intended for the solid tranquil species of men whose character is so well given by the same poet in their representative *Ocellus*—<sup>5</sup>

*Rusticus abnormis sapiens crassaque Minerva.*

Thus imitated by Pope:

—“One not vers’d in schools,  
But strong in sense, and wise without the rules.”

Nor do I write to those whose minds are concentrated by the necessity of providing support for their lives, and whose attention therefore being fixed on the immediate means of obtaining it, are kept from wandering after variety of enjoyment. I write to people like myself, in easy circumstances, who are arrived at the age of serious thinking; to beings whose existence is compounded of reason and sentiment; who can judge rationally, yet feel keenly; who have an incessant wish for happiness, but find it difficult to have that wish gratified.

Happiness may be considered as the honey of human life. It may be extracted from innumerable substances, and provided it be pure and wholesome, it matters not from whence it is derived, and though “out of the bitter may come forth the sweet.” Happiness

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What is the reason that no life whatever appears happy in a descriptive detail? Even your life at Mount Edgcumbe would not have appeared happy, though you had not added your confession of weariness. I wish you would explain this to me. May it be that life is happy viewed only in masses; for to see a man live hour by hour makes us not think him happy as well as reading a detail of his life does? I am afraid this is a very confused speculation. But try the sentiment. Read an account how any *happy family* passes a day, and tell me if you would not wish to live so.

See also *Hyp.* 23, 24, 53 n. 2, 65, and notes.

<sup>4</sup> *Carm.*, 3. 1. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Properly, *Ocellus*, but left uncorrected by Boswell; the line is found in *Horace*, *Sat.*, 2. 2. 3, and Pope, *Sat.*, 2. 9. Boswell uses this famous allusion several times; see *Hyp.* 50, where the name is also rendered *Ocellus*, and *Letters of B.*, 1. 11. It is used as heading also for *The Spectator*, 109.

in the country, therefore, as happiness in town, is in a great measure the effect of industry applied by each individual in the way that he has found from his particular experience to be most beneficial.<sup>6</sup>

I may be wrong. But I do confess, it appears to me at present that a man cannot be happy in the country whose mind is not tolerably sedate, either naturally, or from having seen and enjoyed a great deal, and exhausted his curiosity and eager desires. There is indeed in the country the variety of seasons to contemplate; but the circling year moves too slowly for him whose blood bounds with rapidity, and he is apt to grow impatient and fretful. The same remark may be made as to most other modes of occupation or amusement in the country as means of happiness. The sports of the field, indeed, afford play to the highest degree of activity and animation. But they are but for short periods, and are rather corporeal enjoyments than mental. Agriculture has much variety, but it is a sober variety. All its operations are carried on deliberately; so that there is not that quick succession of objects without which a mind of vivacity is uneasy, and languishes. I hope I have many worthy readers who will scarcely believe what I am now writing. I sincerely wish them a continuance of that comfortable useful contentment which they possess; but I beg they may have some friendly allowance for those who are composed of warmer and more flashy particles, who do not assume a vain superiority over them upon the whole, though at times it must not be denied that their felicity is more exquisite.<sup>7</sup> A man of vivacity,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Boswell's remarks in the *Life of J.*, 2. 223, in which he takes exception to a generalization made by Dr. Johnson on country life:

When one of his friends endeavored to maintain that a country gentleman might contrive to pass his life very agreeably, "Sir (said he,) you cannot give me an instance of any man who is permitted to lay out his own time, contriving not to have tedious hours." This observation, however, is equally applicable to gentlemen who live in cities, and are of no profession.

The "friend" who tried to maintain the point against Johnson was without doubt Boswell himself, trying, as in this essay, to convince himself that there must be something to be said for country life. His actual feelings, completely opposed to such a point of view, are shown in his letters; see notes 12 and 14 below, and *Hyp.* 58 n. 16.

On the happy effects of industry, see *Hyp.* 6, 26, 39, 40, 52, 57, 63, and notes.

<sup>7</sup> The contest in Boswell's mind is clearly shown in the following paragraphs. The man of vivacity so feelingly described is a sympathetic self-portrait, yet the

unless his views are kept steady, by a constant golden prospect of gain, cannot long be pleased in looking at the operations of ploughing, dunging, harrowing, reaping, or threshing. It is all very just what many sagacious authors have written in praise of agriculture, and no body will dispute the pointed eulogium which Swift gives to him who makes two blades of grass grow where there was only one before.<sup>8</sup> The judgement will be unquestionably convinced; nay, for a moment the liveliest of us may comply with *Thompson's* enthusiastic exhortation.<sup>9</sup>

“Ye generous Britons, venerate the plough.”

But utility is not more universally the cause of pleasure than wholesomeness is;<sup>10</sup> and a man will not prefer ploughing to a play-house, nor milk to Champagne. Even if the occupations of agriculture could give lively minds pleasure, we must consider what dull intervals there are. When a field is completely sown, and

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essay concludes with the effort to find pleasure in contemplating association with country neighbors, whom Boswell himself disliked—see note 14 below.

He was always conscious of the fact that his vivacity and sensitiveness to stimulus was the cause of his greatest pleasures as well as of his deepest woes; see *Hyp.* 4, 5; 23, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 48, 70, and notes; *Letters of B.*, 1. 12, 62, 85, 109, 127, 178, 198, 240; 2. 301, 305, 397, 416, 432. Cf. his remark in the *Life of J.*, 4. 391—

Talking of various enjoyments, I argued that a refinement of taste was a disadvantage, as they who have attained to it must be seldomer pleased than those who have no nice discrimination, and are therefore satisfied with every thing that comes in their way.

He was able, however, to persuade himself from time to time that he was a “sober and grave” man because he liked dignified people such as Temple and Johnson (*Letters of B.*, 1. 11, 24, 108), or because he felt in the mood to sanction the quiet conventions of society (*ibid.*, 1. 82, 99). See also his dignified arguments for prudence and propriety in *Hyp.* 23, 44, 62, 64, and notes.

<sup>8</sup> In the speech of the king of Brobdingnag on domestic policy (*Gulliver's Travels*, 2. 7).

<sup>9</sup> *The Seasons (Spring)*. Boswell failed to correct the misspelling of *Thomson* in the text.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Boswell's efforts to establish the utility of various abstractions, *Hyp.* 13, 24, 27. Here, he reverses General Paoli's assertion (*Life of J.*, 2. 190):

We then fell into a disquisition whether there is any beauty independent of utility. The General maintained there was not. Dr. Johnson maintained that there was; and he instanced a coffee-cup which he held in his hand, the painting of which was of no real use, as the cup would hold the coffee equally well if plain; yet the painting was beautiful.

left to itself, we cannot actually perceive the crop springing. Even plantations, the rearing of which is by much the highest rural enjoyment, advance so imperceptibly; that a Hypochondriac proprietor is sick and sick again and again with *ennui*, and is tempted with wild wishes to hang himself on one of his own trees long before they are able to bear his weight.<sup>11</sup>

Let not then a man of exuberant vivacity, keen sensations, and perpetual rage for variety, attempt to live in the country. If he does, it is more than probable he will be miserable himself, and the scorn, perhaps the scourge of those around him. Let the edge of his mind be blunted in the world, and his spirits be reduced to a temperate state before he settles in a situation where the greatest part of his time must pass without vivid consciousness of any kind, and at best in uniform serenity.

If however a man be fit for living in the country by his natural disposition, or by having gone through such a course of fermenta-

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 38, 64. Scott, in his notes to the Croker *Correspondence and Diaries*, says (2. 34)—“The love of planting [in Scotland] which has become almost a passion—I wish the love of taking care of plantations bore any proportion to it—is much to be ascribed to Johnson’s sarcasms.” Johnson’s comments on the bleak barrenness of Scottish landscape may be found in the *Life of J.*, *passim* (see especially Index under SCOTLAND, trees); *Journey to the Western Islands*; *Letters of J.*, I. 238:

.... we continued our journey through a country not uncultivated, but so denuded of its woods, that in all this journey I had not travelled an hundred yards between hedges, or seen five trees fit for the carpenter. A few small plantations may be found, but I believe scarcely any thirty years old; at least, I do not forget to tell, they are all posterior to the Union. This day we dined with a country gentleman, who has in his grounds the remains of a Druid’s temple. .... Here I saw a few trees. We went on to Foris, over the heath where Macbeth met the witches, but had no adventure; only in the way we saw for the first time some houses with fruit trees about them. The improvements of the Scotch are for immediate profit, they do not yet think it worth their while to plant what will not produce something to be eaten or sold in a very little time.

See also *ibid.*, I. 242, 250, 289. In the course of his visit to Auchinleck in 1773, Johnson advised Boswell to “plant assiduously,” thereby following the example of Lord Auchinleck himself (*Hebr.*, 433); in 1777 the advice was repeated (*Life of J.*, 3. 235–36):

He recommended to me to plant a considerable part of a large moorish farm which I had purchased, and he made several calculations of the expence and profit. .... He impressed upon me the importance of planting at the first in a sufficient manner, quoting the saying “*In bello non licet bis errare*,” and adding, “this is equally true in planting.”

See also *The Spectator*, 583, in which planting is advised as one of the duties of the country gentleman, and one of the “more noble” of country amusements.

tion in busy and gay life, that turbulence is evaporated, and serenity is not insipid to him, he may spend a very creditable and agreeable life.<sup>12</sup> It is by no means necessary that every country

<sup>12</sup> Contrast *Hyp.* 48, in which Boswell demands consciousness as the first prerequisite of all pleasure. From his early years, he seems to have believed that if he could but have a considerable unbroken period of excitement, he would be willing to submit to the tame necessities of ordinary life. See *Hyp.* 3 n. 2, and his letters at the time of his European tour (*Letters of B.*, 1. 11, 12, 33), especially that addressed to Andrew Mitchell in 1764 (*ibid.*, 55–57):

I now particularly stand in need of your prudent and kind counsel with respect to my travels. I have had another letter from my father, in which he continues of opinion that travelling is of very little use, and may do a great deal of harm. . . . I own that the words of the Apostle Paul, "I must see Rome," are strongly *borne in* upon my mind. It would give infinite pleasure. It would give me taste for a life-time, and I should go home to Auchinleck with serene contentment. . . . After passing four months on classic ground I would come through France and go home, as I said to my father, *Uti conviva satur*. . . . Don't you think that rather than go home, contrary to what I much desire and cannot help thinking very proper, don't you think it worth while to humour me so far as to allow me my year and a reasonable sum, after which I return clear and contented, without any pretence for my gloomy disposition to murmur at?

He kept up a comparable debate with his father and Dr. Johnson (and, in later years, with himself!) on the advisability of visiting or practising law in London, and sang the praises of the metropolis as "a heaven upon earth—comparatively"; see *Hyp.* 36, 58, and notes; *Letters of B.*, 1. 8, 19, 20–21, 38, 88, 215, 219, 222, 223, 228, 248; 2. 304, 356, 359, 364; *Boswelliana*, 241, 279, 292–93, 323; *Life of J.*, 2. 315–17, 386; 3. 5, 202, 279, 343, 413, 430; 4. 357, 405. In this last passage, Johnson allows the very arguments on which Boswell had been basing his desire to live in London:

. . . . though your expectations . . . should not be totally answered, you can hardly fail to get friends who will do for you all that your present situation allows you to hope; and if, after a few years, you should return to Scotland, you will return with a mind supplied by various conversation, and many opportunities of enquiry, with much knowledge, and materials for reflection and instruction.

Although Boswell tried to convince himself that even London would grow dull in time, and although after his wife's death it did fail him for a period (*Letters of B.*, 2. 307, 380, 398, 440), he usually felt gay even when he was not well, in the city (*ibid.*, 2. 318, 362, 399), and in his last years expressed himself in a flight almost lyrical on the subject (*ibid.*, 2. 449)—

O London! London! there let me be; there let me see my friends; there a fair chance is given for pleasing and being pleased.

The question of *fitness* for residence in the country remained a topic of conversation between Boswell and Johnson to the last; in their final meeting (June 30, 1784), it is Johnson who inveighs against country life, in much the same terms that Boswell employs in this essay, while Boswell still persists in trying to find arguments for it (*Life of J.*, 4. 390):

Our conversation turned upon living in the country, which Johnson, whose melancholy mind required the dissipation of quick successive variety, had habituated himself to consider as a kind of mental imprisonment. "Yet, Sir, (said I,) there are many people who are content to

gentleman should be vulgar,<sup>13</sup> ignorant, and rustic, like *Hippolitus*, in Dr. Young's Universal Passion. He may be a scholar, and devote several hours a day to books. He may retain enough of the good breeding of a court. He may be an useful justice of the peace, and promote subordination, good morals, and religion in his neighbourhood, and he may have the pleasures of society, if not with so high a zest as in cities, yet in a very satisfactory manner.

Fastidious people, who have been long used to the glossy polish of elegant life, may be disgusted with the plainness of those with whom they must associate in the country. But unless they are delicate to sickliness, they will by degrees be habituated to a more homely style, and by exerting themselves with complacent attention, they may in time diffuse gentility amongst their visitors.<sup>14</sup>

I am aware of the strong objection, that in the country a man is not master of his time as in town; he does not invite company to come to him when he is at leisure, and likes to see them; but he

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live in the country." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is in the intellectual world as in the physical world; we are told by natural philosophers that a body is at rest in the place that is fit for it; they who are content to live in the country, are fit for the country."

<sup>13</sup> Originally *regular*; corrected by Boswell's note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 38. The Hippolitus of Dr. Young is described in his *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion*, Sat. 1 and 2. Boswell alludes to the character again in his *Letters*, 1. 202—"Whose erudition is a Christmas Tale."

<sup>14</sup> Sharp self-criticism; Boswell was really one of those who were "delicate to sickliness," as his letters show:

But indeed, my worthy priest, it required some philosophy to bear the change from England to Scotland. The unpleasing tone, the rude familiarity, the barren conversation of those whom I found here, in comparison with what I had left, really hurt my feelings.—(*Letters of B.*, I. 228.)

I really, my dear Temple, believe that as much pain may be suffered from *antipathies* as from almost any cause. Would it not *torture* you to be again at Professor Hunter's, eating *jeel*?—(*Ibid.*, 2. 432.)

See also *ibid.*, 1. 8; 2. 353, 374, 378, 383, 416, 462-63; *Boswelliana*, 287, 323.

The arguments by which Boswell is trying to convince himself of the worthiness of country associations, in this essay, probably came from conversations with Dr. Johnson; cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 201:

JOHNSON. ". . . We must, however, allow, that a well-regulated great family may improve a neighbourhood in civility and elegance, and give an example of good order, virtue, and piety; and so its residence at home may be of much advantage. . . ."

and *ibid.*, 3. 283—

". . . a man of family and estate ought to consider himself as having the charge of a district, over which he is to diffuse civility and happiness."

The subject of country associations is continued in *Hyp.* 38, 58.

must be at all times ready to entertain whatever guests choose to come to him. I imagine this objection is much augmented by a certain indolence of temper, which has not resolution to regulate one's system of life with spirited regularity. Every country gentleman's family should be considered as a little independent state, which has its own laws and customs, with which compliance is expected, and which are not to yield to the inclinations of strangers, who may have been accustomed to live differently. The master of the family has his own affairs to arrange, his own studies and amusements to follow: he is to consider hospitality, and a proper attention and civility to his guests as one of the duties of his station; but that duty is not to be a burthensome task; one gentleman may be more with his guests, one may be less; one may entertain them in one way, one in another; and these varieties should be encouraged, as producing more happiness than a general sameness; but it should never be understood that the master of a family in the country is bound to any particular mode of treating those who visit him. If the view which I now give of a country gentleman's obligations towards his guests were once well established, I am certain that the restraint which is so much dreaded by men of sensibility would no longer exist; different dispositions would have free scope, and society in the country would have an ease, which both the master of the family and his guests would find infinitely more agreeable than the forced exertions on both sides, which are usually experienced, while neither party is sure how the other really feels.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 58, on hospitality. A man who had every reason to object to Scottish customs of hospitality was Sir Alexander Dick, who is mentioned as entertaining a thousand people a year (*Life of J.*, 4. 235). In the same passage, Boswell records Johnson's comment, "Were I a country gentleman, I should not be very hospitable; I should not have crowds in my house," and a little later in the same year, reports (*Life of J.*, 4. 256):

I talked of living in the country. JOHNSON. "Don't set up for what is called hospitality; it is a waste of time, and a waste of money; you are eaten up, and not the more respected for your liberality. If your house be like an inn, nobody cares for you. A man who stays a week with another, makes him a slave for a week." BOSWELL. "But there are people, Sir, who make their houses a home to their guests, and are themselves quite easy." JOHNSON. "Then, Sir, home must be the same to the guests, and they need not come."

Gibbon objected to the country life at his father's house, not only because of visits received, but of visits paid (*Memoirs of My Life*, ed. Hill, 118):

My sole complaint, which I piously suppressed, arose from the kind restraint imposed upon the freedom of my time. By the habit of early rising I always secured a sacred portion of the

This paper being now of sufficient length, I shall break off, and reserve till next month some more reflections upon the life of a country gentleman; but I must not lay down my pen till I have inculcated upon my readers the salutary consideration in my motto, which *Volusenus* in his admirable treatise supposes to be engraved on the seventh pillar of the *Temple of Tranquillity*. Let us do our best to attain happiness either in town or country; we must still keep in mind, that on this side the grave there will ever be imperfection.

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day, and many scattered moments were stolen and employed by my studious industry. But the family hours of breakfast, of dinner, of tea, and of supper, were regular and long: after breakfast Mrs. Gibbon expected my company in her dressing-room; after tea, my father claimed my conversation and the perusal of the newspapers; and in the midst of an interesting work I was often called down to receive the visit of some idle neighbours. Their dinners and visits required, in due season, a similar return; and I dreaded the period of the full moon, which was usually reserved for our more distant excursions.

See also the number of *The Adventurer* signed *Mercator* (102), which points out the dullness of country life, and the uselessness of hospitality, if one's guests were uncongenial; and *The Spectator*, 474, which is given up to the expression of a city-dweller's disgust for the boisterous habits of his country neighbors, and the promiscuous entertaining which country life entailed:

.... my uneasiness in the country .... arises rather from the society than the solitude of it. To be obliged to receive and return visits from and to a circle of neighbours, who, through diversity of age or inclinations, can neither be entertaining nor serviceable to us, is a vile loss of time, and a slavery from which a man should deliver himself, if possible: for why must I lose the remaining part of my life, because they have thrown away the former part of theirs?

In 1773, however, Johnson's dry common sense put an end to the argument which Boswell suggests against hospitality in this essay (*Hebr.*, 401):

I spoke of living in the country, and upon what footing one should be with neighbours. I observed that some people were afraid of being on too easy a footing with them, from an apprehension that their time would not be their own. He made the obvious remark, that it depended much on what kind of neighbours one has.

In spite of all this, Boswell did his share of entertaining country folk. In 1775 he reports (*Letters of B.*, 1. 227)—“There has been a numerous flight of Hebrideans in Edinburgh, whom I have been happy to entertain at my house.”

No. XXXVIII. Nov. 1780.

[ON COUNTRY LIFE—*Concluded*]

*Hæc et quæ possunt placidos offendere mores  
Cogunt relinquī mænia,  
Dulcia secreti repetantur ut ocia ruris  
Nugis amæna seriis;  
Tempora disponas ubi tu tua, jusque tuum sit  
Ut nihil agas vel quod voles.—AUSONIUS.<sup>1</sup>*

“Scenes which fine sensibility disgust,  
If you would shun, the city fly you must,  
Rural retirement sweetly to enjoy  
In placid ease, while small pursuits employ;  
Where of your time you are the master still,  
And may do nothing, or just what you will.”

JOHN DRYDEN is said to have been the inventor of that mode of English versification called a *triplet*, which is bringing together three lines, all ending with the same sound. *Dryden*, who was a man of great philosophical thinking and dignity of character, appears to have been very desirous of accounting for every part of his poetical conduct in a satisfactory manner; and he with much grave plausibility assigns what may perhaps appear to some a very profound reason for his use of the triplet. “I frequently (says he) make use of triplet rhymes, because they bound the sense, making the last verse of the triplet a pindarick.” Here is a semblance of critical ratiocination, the meaning of which, I confess, eludes my understanding. For, the sense must be of a very intractable substance, that cannot be compressed into one couplet, or expanded into two, but is fitted only to the precise extent of three lines: and how the last verse of a triplet is made a pindarick, I really do not conceive.<sup>2</sup> With all deference for *Dryden*, whose name is vener-

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.*, 6. 29–34.

<sup>2</sup> Either Boswell has read carelessly, or he quotes from a secondary source, which compresses Dryden’s statement in such wise as to render it confused. See the dedication of the *Aeneis* (*John Dryden’s Works*, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, 14. 208, 221):

Spenser has . . . . given me boldness to make use sometimes of his Alexandrine line, which we call, though improperly, the Pindaric. . . . It adds a certain majesty to the verse . . . . and stops the sense from overflowing into another line. . . . I take another licence in

able and illustrious, I am to mention what I was told by a person eminent for his knowledge of literary anecdotes. It seems, the real occasion of that poet's introducing so many triplets into his works, was his bookseller's objecting that he had not furnished the complement<sup>3</sup> of lines for which he had agreed. Upon which he sat down, and added three lines to a number of couplets, till the objection was removed.

All this concerning *Dryden* is a digression from the subject of my paper. I meant only to observe, that as *Dryden* introduced triplets of verses, I have, though unintentionally, indeed, introduced triplets of essays,—Three on Love, three on Death—and now three on Living in the Country. But it will be kept in mind, that which I set out with my readers as a periodical essayist, I did not undertake to conduct them along any particular path of science, or to any fixed point of entertainment. If I can instruct or amuse them in any way, however desultory, I gain my end; and I flatter myself, that the present introductory digression will not displease.

I am now to continue my reflections upon living in the country; and I cannot help pleasing myself with fancying that these reflections may “soothe some weary souls,” when from bad weather,

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my verses: for I frequently make use of triplet rhymes, and for the same reason, because they bound the sense. And therefore I generally join these two licences together, and make the last verse of the triplet a Pindaric; for besides the majesty which it gives, it confines the sense within the barriers of three lines, which would languish if it were lengthened into four.

<sup>3</sup> Originally *compliment*; corrected by Boswell's note printed at the end of *Hyp. 39.*

I cannot find any source for this anecdote, which may be a confused rendering of famous tid-bits about Dryden, known to everybody in Boswell's day, and possibly coming to his ears from Dr. Johnson, Edmund Malone, or the anecdote-writer Joseph Spence (known to Boswell through Sir Alexander Dick). Both Johnson and Malone wrote biographies of Dryden, and both mention on good authority the complaints of the printer Jacob Tonson, and the surly embarrassment of the poet. On one occasion Tonson protested that he had received but 1,446 verses for 50 guineas, when he had been promised 1,518 verses for 40 guineas; and in 1698, when Dryden had been paid £268 for 10,000 lines of his projected *Fables*, he was obliged to fulfill the agreement by the addition of an epistle and an ode.

It is possible that Boswell confused these facts with the famous anecdote of Dryden's demanding an advance from Tonson, and being refused, sending a triplet of wretched personal satire to the printer with the message, “Tell the dog that he who wrote these lines, can write more.”

and want of occupation, the time which they are obliged to remain at a distance from town, seems tedious and dreary.<sup>4</sup>

Young people who have tasted of the pleasures of gay life in cities, just enough to give a keen inclination for more of the same enjoyment, are seriously distressed, and therefore truly objects of pity when forced into the country. *Pope's* description of a miss in that situation, in his epistle to Miss *Blount*, is admirably just;<sup>5</sup> and I do declare, I think it is inhumane not to endeavour to prevent or relieve such unhappiness; in order to which there

<sup>4</sup> Boswell's spirits were always affected by weather or the seasons; rainy days in the country reduced him to languor or the spleen (*Letters of B.*, I. 14; *Hebr.*, 176, 181, 183, 298, 346). The subject was a bone of contention between him and Johnson; see *Life of J.*, Index under WEATHER—especially I. 384 ff.:

In No. 11 [of *The Idler*] he treats with the utmost contempt the opinion that our mental faculties depend, in some degree, upon the weather; an opinion, which they who have never experienced its truth are not to be envied, and of which he himself could not but be sensible, as the effects of weather upon him were very visible. Yet thus he declaims:—

“Surely, nothing is more reproachful to a being endowed with reason, than to resign its powers to the influence of the air, and live in dependence on the weather and the wind for the only blessings which nature has put into our power, tranquillity and benevolence. This distinction of seasons is produced only by imagination operating on luxury. To temperance, every day is bright; and every hour is propitious to diligence. He that shall resolutely excite his faculties, or exert his virtues, will soon make himself superior to the seasons; and may set at defiance the morning mist and the evening damp, the blasts of the east, and the clouds of the south.”

Alas! it is too certain, that where the frame has delicate fibres, and there is a fine sensibility, such influences of the air are irresistible. He might as well have bid defiance to the ague, the palsy, and all other bodily disorders. Such boasting of the mind is false elevation.

For the effect of the lack of occupation in the country, see *Hyp.* 36 and notes; *Hyp.* 58 n. 16; *Letters of B.*, I. 18; 2. 290, 353, 378, 440—especially I. 19:

Well can I imagine the feelings which you describe, upon your returning to Cambridge. Mine were very similar when I found myself in the country, after being in London. The animal spirits, accustomed to be put in motion by the variety of bustling life, must be flat and torpid in the stillness of retirement. Habit, to be sure, is of great influence. But our minds are surely somewhat different in their original composition. Some people can support retirement, and others are miserable without society; and yet the minds of these people have been cultivated . . . . in the same degree. For my own share, retirement has always sunk my spirits; and I cannot say that I ever had any uneasy sensations upon coming to town.

Contrast to all these statements, Boswell's assertion in *Hyp.* 26 that the mind can be directed to wholesome thoughts.

<sup>5</sup> *Epist.*, 5. I:

As some fond virgin, whom her mother's care  
Drags from the town to wholesome country air,  
Just when she learns to roll a melting eye,  
And hear a spark, yet think no danger nigh. . . . .

should be a delicate attention employed gradually, to produce in them a love of reading, and to cultivate *a taste for nature*, of which the ingenious and much lamented *Fordyce* beautifully discourses in his “*Dialogues concerning education.*”<sup>6</sup> Differ as we may as to the general preference of living in town, or living in the country, every one whose mind is not utterly callous to genuine impressions, must, in some moments of his life, be sensible of the delight which the contemplation of beautiful Nature affords. *Volusenus*<sup>7</sup> says well, *Natura nemini neverca*, “Nature is a stepmother to none;” and when the mind is in a pure placid state, no earthly pleasure can be more relished than that which arises from the “knowledge of Nature’s works,” with which Thomson, in his *Seasons*, prays to be “enriched.”<sup>8</sup> Nay, even without knowledge, we can receive much enjoyment from mere sensation. But we must have our capacities open to the influence of nature. We must be within their reach.<sup>9</sup> It is a pretty remark in<sup>10</sup> *Les Saisons*, a modern

<sup>6</sup> David *Fordyce* (1711-1751), professor of moral philosophy at Aberdeen, was the author of several works; his *Elements of Moral Philosophy* (1754) reached four editions, and was translated into German. The work to which Boswell alludes was published in two volumes (1745-1748) as “*Dialogues concerning Education*, by D. F.” *Fordyce* lost his life in a storm at sea when he was returning home after a European tour.

<sup>7</sup> See *Hyp.* 37 n. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *The Seasons* (*Autumn*).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 36. Here Boswell is once more “forcing a taste for rural beauties” (*Letters of B.*, 1. 243); contrast this passage to the blunt candor of *Hyp.* 37, and the famous interchange with Johnson in 1763 (*Life of J.*, 1. 533):

We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose, by way of trying my disposition, “Is not this very fine?” Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of Nature, and being more delighted with “the busy hum of men,” I answered, “Yes, Sir; but not equal to Fleet-street.” *JOHNSON*. “You are right, Sir.”

See also *Hebr.*, 127; *Letters of B.*, 2. 276:

I know not but to the pure natural mind the pleasures and beauties of the country are superior to those of a city. But I have habits far different from those of pure nature. Besides, may it not be maintained that a mind in the state that mine is, is more civilised? and *Boswelliana*, 230:

Boswell said that to be a good rural poet a man must have an appetite for the beauties of nature as another has for his dinner. A man who has a poor stomach will never talk with force of a good dinner; nor will he whose taste is feeble talk with force of a fine prospect. This kind of taste must be felt, and cannot even be imagined by others.

The following paragraphs of this essay show the force of this introspective comment!

<sup>10</sup> Originally by; corrected by Boswell’s note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 39.

French poem, when speaking of the happiness of peasants, that they are

*Si près de la Nature ils sentent tous ses bienfaits,*  
“So near to Nature they feel all her beneficence.”

And how much is the felicity in contemplating nature increased, if we rise to devotion,

“And look thro’ Nature up to Nature’s God.” POPE.<sup>11</sup>

But I am afraid that many people who reside in the country, or who visit it occasionally, are very little disposed to the mild serene enjoyment of nature; but have their minds as coarsely interested with projects of gain, and their passions as much heated with rivalships, and above all, with political contests, as brokers in Change-Alley, or electors in Westminster. To these a country life is much the same as a town life. If the attention be wholly fixed on similar objects in town and in the country, the difference of place, being unperceived, is nothing, as a man drunk in town is just the same as a man drunk in the country.

I have observed that there are no greater pedants than country gentlemen. By pedants, I mean people whose conversation is entirely filled with their own pursuits, without regard to others in company, who know nothing of the subject. Agriculture is no doubt very estimable, because it is indispensably necessary to our subsistence, since the earth was cursed for the disobedience of man, and he was doomed to “eat bread in the sweat of his brow;”<sup>12</sup> yet when the distinction of ranks in a numerous nation has been long established by civilization, those who are elevated by rank or riches, escape this doom in the literal sense. If they have gold enough, they live in the golden age so far in effect that they enjoy all the productions of the earth without bodily labour, as freely as if they sprung up to them spontaneously; and it is most certainly true, that there are numbers of people in the city of London who have

*Les Saisons* (1769) was the work of Jean-François de Saint-Lambert (1718? – 1803). Boswell misquotes from memory ll. 139–40 (*l'Été*):

Si la loi le protége, il est heureux sans frais;  
Auprès de la nature, il sent tous ses bienfaits.

<sup>11</sup> *Essay on Man*, 4. 332.

<sup>12</sup> *Gen.*, 3. 19—“in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

not the least notion of the processes by which the various articles of living are procured, and who, for instance, would be quite amazed if told that their hot rolls come from a plant which they may see covering the ground in the spring like the grass in the Green Park.<sup>13</sup> Agriculture, therefore, to a great proportion of people, is a very indifferent, and a very dull topic; and although Addison, in his elegant metaphorical language, tells us that Virgil, in his *Georgicks*, tosses about his dung gracefully;<sup>14</sup> there is to most of us no grace in any part of actual farming. Country gentlemen therefore should consider this; and not oblige all of their guests to hear nothing but what concerns rustic operations. Still more should they be delicate as to taking them out to walk and view their improvements, or perhaps to stand by them while they look on their labourers at work. If a guest asks to see what is going on about a gentleman's seat, let him have all advantages for satisfying his curiosity, or learning something which he did not know before. But gentlemen are too apt to trespass on the complying good manners of their guests, and will carry them to survey prodigious plantations scarcely peeping over the tops of the long grass, immense tracts of land which were cleared of furze, levelled and limed the year before, and thousands of yards of stone wall or ditch and hedge, with which they have enclosed a number of farms, the rents of which they expect will at least be tripled. All these things may be of great consequence to them.<sup>15</sup> But what are they to the guests? What is worse, some country gentlemen will keep their unhappy guests for hours on their legs, while they oversee a parcel of fellows quarrying stones, or hang in dumb attention over the inanimate prospect of a burning heath, which

<sup>13</sup> The three famous and fashionable parks were St. James's, Hyde, and Green Park, where it was the custom to walk between twelve and two or seven and midnight. Considerable freedom of manner prevailed at these times, and the presence of children was forbidden. In 1767 George III reduced Green Park to about sixty acres, in order to enlarge the gardens of old Buckingham House.

<sup>14</sup> In Addison's *Essay on Virgil's Georgics*, originally published as a preface to Dryden's translation. Boswell's opinion of the *Essay* is certainly uninfluenced by Johnson, who says (in his *Life of Addison*) that it is "juvenile, superficial, and uninstructive, without much either of the scholar's learning or the critick's penetration." Cf. *Hyp.* 14 n. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Originally *All these things may be, very true, of that consequence*; corrected by Boswell's note at the end of *Hyp.* 39.

may be good entertainment to the proprietor, who expects to gain by it, but is a sorry amusement to other people.<sup>16</sup>

As a contrast to such grievous oppression of guests, I can with pleasure mention, from my own knowledge, the behaviour of a worthy, amiable, and accomplished country gentleman, who makes his friends heartily welcome, but no more thinks of harrassing them with surveys of his farming operations than of obliging them to see dinner drest in his kitchen. Nay, though remarkably well skilled in country affairs, and so fond of them as to write a British Georgick, I have known him have a learned and ingenious friend with him, who having no taste for farming, begged leave to enjoy the country in the house; and lay on a settee in the parlour, looking out to the garden and prospects beyond it: this he called his *rusticating*, and was indulged in it with the utmost good humour.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Boswell complained in a letter to Temple in 1775 that in the midst of a pleasant party he felt a “cloudiness damp [his] mind. But”—he adds—“I had been exhausted by riding all the forenoon, and expatiating upon rural beauties which I did not much feel” (*Letters of B.*, 1. 238). See also *ibid.*, 1. 235, 241.

The tone of these comments is reminiscent of Boswell's self-pity for what he endured in the effort to please his father; cf. *Hyp.* 36 n. 11. Contrast to these statements Boswell's defense of Lord Monboddo as an “enthusiastical farmer” (*Hebr.*, 126).

<sup>17</sup> I strongly suspect that the ingenious friend who rusticated so delicately was Boswell himself, although *learned* is not a term which the honest Hypochondriack usually applies to himself. It may have been Dr. John Armstrong (d. 1779), author of *The Art of Preserving Health*, which Boswell quotes in *Hyp.* 5; he was even more oppressed by ennui and indolence than Boswell. Both men were on the easy footing of affectionate friendship in the household of the “author of the British Georgick,” and were probably allowed to do as they chose during their visits.

The British Virgil was Sir Alexander Dick (1703–1785), who won a gold medal for his rhubarb, and whose biography Boswell intended to write (*Life of J.*, 4. 303; *Letters of B.*, 2. 280). He was born Cunningham, but took the name of Dick on succeeding to the baronetcy at the death of his brother in 1746. He had taken the degree of M.D. at Leyden in 1725, but did not practise after his acquisition of estates and title. For comment regarding his hospitality see *Hyp.* 37 n. 15.

Of the Georgick, Boswell says (*Letters of B.*, 2. 286):

I put into [Bishop Lowth's] hands, at Sir Alexander Dick's desire, the first book of a British Georgick, which the worthy amiable Knight has been for some time past (after 73) amusing himself in composing. It is blank verse precepts . . . in agriculture and gardening, interspersed with political reflections and complimentary characters. You cannot imagine how

A much more intimate acquaintance is formed in the country than in town. In town we see each other only during fragments of our existence, and may more easily assume what character we please. But in the country we have whole days together; and each day is a life, as Shakspeare says in *Macbeth*; <sup>18</sup> so that it is exceedingly difficult to disguise our real tempers and dispositions. Then there is the pleasure of having casual supplies of company and conversation, which we enjoy with a higher relish than constant good society, of which we are sure; as it has been I believe justly remarked, that it is more agreeable to receive occasional acquisitions of money by a profession or trade, than to have a certain annual income. And when there is a good society in the country of people who like and esteem one another, there is comfort and cordiality beyond what is found in any other mode of living. They for a time all form one family, the master of which may, according to the agreeable principles of the fourth commandment, consider each guest "the stranger that is within his gate," <sup>19</sup> as in some degree under his care in every respect, even as to his religion and morals.

There is one view of a country gentleman's life which pleases me most, and that is considering him as maintaining the station which his ancestors have held for generations. In doing this with benevolence and propriety, he may indulge at once in affectionate attachment and laudable pride. <sup>20</sup>

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fond he is of this *work*. There are in it very good things; and sometimes tolerable lines. But he really is not a poet. . . . Last year I left a part of it with Dr. Armstrong. I was curious to see how he would bring himself off with Sir Alexander, in giving his opinion of what his friend exhibited to him as poetry, but which *he* knew not to come under that species of composition. He did very well. He wrote.—It has the best part of poetry, "good sense, without which all poetry is little better than nonsense. But I wish you would give us something *de temperamentis*; for which you must have made collections." Here he made a fine transition to Sir Alexander's skill in physick, not acknowledging, however, in his freind [sic] what he states in his poem on health, "One power of physick, melody, and song."

<sup>18</sup> This phrase from *Macbeth*, 2. 2. 38, is a favorite of Boswell's; he quotes it again in *Hyp.* 48. It had perhaps been lodged in his mind by his revered Edward Young's repetition of the figure in *Night Thoughts*, 2—"each day a life." The spelling *Shakspeare* differs from Boswell's usual *Shakespeare*, but he allowed it to remain uncorrected.

<sup>19</sup> Contrast this paragraph to the closing passage of *Hyp.* 37. Boswell here resumes the duty of forcing his tastes.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 36. All of Boswell's records are full of his "ancient family in the west of Scotland, upon which he values himself not a little" (*Correspondence*

In the Annual Register, 1765, there are some very agreeable reflections upon this subject, said to be extracted from a letter written by the Reverend Mr. Comber, of East-Newton, Yorkshire. He points out the advantage of the heir of an ancient inheritance being kept at the family-seat in his early years, as much as is consistent with the scheme of a liberal education; and mentions the following example: "I know a courtier, a man of taste and letters, who, though generally confined by the nature of his employment in and about town, yet endeavours every summer to bring down his eldest son from Westminster school to his country seat, possessed and lived upon by his ancestors for several generations, 'that he may *learn to love it*,' as he expresses himself." He shews, that if an intercourse of mutual tenderness between father and son has been preserved while living together upon their paternal ground, the best effects will follow. He quotes a beautiful passage from *Tully's Second Book of Laws*, as to the peculiar delight which we feel at a family seat where we have passed our youth.<sup>21</sup> If the writer of the reflections be alive, he has my best wishes; and I should be happy to know more of him.

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with Erskine, 36), his "ancient blood, the pride of which was his predominant passion" (*Hebr.*, 57, 433), his "feudal principles," which he held "to a degree of enthusiasm" (*Life of J.*, 3. 202; *Hebr.*, 155, 195, 254; *Letters of B.*, 1. 52, 72, 81, 85, 192, 212, 241, 242-43, 250; 2. 274, 416. Johnson for the most part gave him warm support; he "had the old feudal notions" (*Life of J.*, 3. 201; *Hebr.*, 155, 172, 433), although on some occasions he checked Boswell's flights by the chill reminder that, however pleasant the system might be for the Chief, the vassals did not find it so—"for that state from which all escape as soon as they can, and to which none return after they have left it, must be less happy; and this is the case with the state of dependence on a chief or great man" (*Hebr.*, 120; see also *Life of J.*, 2. 204).

From these persuasions as to the feudal system Boswell derived most of his thoughts on the happiness of subordination; see *Hyp.* 19. Contrast to these passages *Hyp.* 12, 52, in which Boswell inveighs against medieval ideas and systems.

<sup>21</sup> "On the Encouragement to Agriculture arising from the Possession of a paternal Inheritance; extracted from a letter written by the Reverend Mr. Comber of East Newton, Yorkshire"—among the miscellaneous essays for the year which Boswell cites. This is one of the quotations which Boswell gives exactly; he had probably copied it in one of his notebooks because of its application to his own case.

No. XXXIX. Dec. 1780.

## [ON HYPOCHONDRIA]

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."—PSALMS.

THE Hypochondriack is himself at this moment in a state of very dismal depression, so that he cannot be supposed capable of instructing or entertaining his readers.<sup>1</sup> But after keeping them company as a periodical essayist for three years, he considers them as his friends, and trusts that they will treat him with a kindly indulgence. He is encouraged by the compliments which an unknown reader at the London Coffee-house has been pleased to pay him in this Magazine for last month.<sup>2</sup> He may hope that there are many more such readers.

Instead of giving this month an essay published formerly, of which I have a few, that after a proper revision I intend to adopt into this series, I have a mind to try what I can write in so wretched a frame of mind; as there may perhaps be some of my unhappy

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Boswell's ups and downs as a hypochondriac, see *Hyp.* 1 n. 12; for symptoms and suggested cures, see *Hyp.* 5, 6, 13, 23, 25, 29, 30, 40, 48, 50, 51, 63, 67, and notes.

<sup>2</sup> The compliments were printed in the London Magazine for November 1780, as introduction to a letter:

To the Editor of the London Magazine.

Sir,

From the first appearance of the excellent essays of the Hypochondriack, which I find by a reference, was in the month of November 1777, to the present moment, I have been a constant admirer of that valuable and entertaining periodical paper; and am firmly persuaded it has greatly increased the number of your readers. I have indeed often been tempted to address some loose thoughts upon various subjects, to this anonymous Hypo; but upon recollection, he set out with prohibiting all assistance. But this prohibition cannot be construed to extend to a correspondence with you, Sir, on the same subjects that have employed his masterly pen. Objects are seen in different lights by different writers. He has treated the subject of Drinking in a lively, jocose manner, though an Hypochondriack, in three papers, No. xxx, xxxi, and xxxii. But, it is only towards the close of the last, that he has touched upon Drunkenness as a vice. I am certain, by the liberality of his sentiments, that he does not wish to monopolize any subject, and therefore being in possession of an original letter, exposing some of the bad consequences that arise from intoxication, I hope you will give it a place, with a few introductory thoughts, thrown together without order, but seriously intended for the benefit of mankind.

I am, &c.

London Coffeehouse  
Nov. 11th, 1780.

SOBRIETAS.

brethren just as ill as myself, to whom it may be soothing to know that I now write at all.

While endeavouring to think of a subject, that passage in the Psalms, which I have prefixed as a motto to this paper, presented itself to my mind. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

Language cannot better express uneasy perturbation of spirits than the Psalmist has here done. There is in the idea of multitude, disorder, fluctuation, and tumult; and whoever has experienced what I now suffer, must feel his situation justly and strongly described.

Let us select some of those thoughts, the multitude of which confounds and overwhelms the mind of a Hypochondriack.

His opinion of himself is low and desponding. His temporary dejection makes his faculties seem quite feeble. He imagines that every body thinks meanly of him. His fancy roves over the variety of characters whom he knows in the world, and except some very bad ones indeed, they seem all better than his own. He envies the condition of numbers, whom, when in a sound state of mind, he sees to be far inferior to him. He regrets his having ever attempted distinction and excellence in any way, because the effect of his former exertions now serves only to make his insignificance more vexing to him. Nor has he any prospect of more agreeable days when he looks forward. There is a cloud as far as he can perceive, and he supposes it will be charged with thicker vapour, the longer it continues.

He is distracted between indolence and shame. Every kind of labour is irksome to him. Yet he has not resolution to cease from his accustomed tasks. Though he reasons within himself that contempt is nothing, the habitual current of his feelings obliges him to shun being despised. He acts therefore like a slave, not animated by inclination but goaded by fear.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In writing this essay, as in the case of *Hyp.* 6, Boswell is trying to follow the counsels of Dr. Johnson, who asserted that a man could accomplish a task, however he felt, by "setting doggedly to it" (*Life of J.*, 2. 540; *Hebr.*, 44 and notes, 125). Such effort had always been a necessity to Boswell in the pursuit of his profession, which he disliked; he had hoped that "by habit he would acquire the power of application to business" (*Boswelliana*, 218, 242), but this remained a consummation devoutly to be wished. The nervous despondency which he

Every thing appears to him quite indifferent.<sup>4</sup> He repeats from *Hamlet*,

“How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,  
To me seem all the uses of this world.”

He begins actually to believe the strange theory, that nothing exists without the mind,<sup>5</sup> because he is sensible, as he imagines, of a total change in all the objects of his contemplation. What formerly had engaging qualities has them no more. The world is one undistinguished wild.

His distempered fancy darts sudden livid glaring views athwart time and space. He cannot fix his attention upon any one thing, but has transient ideas of a thousand things; as one sees objects in the short intervals when the wind blows aside flame and smoke.<sup>6</sup>

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describes in this number of *The Hypochondriack* overcame him at every approach to his uncongenial duties; he devotes another paragraph to it in *Boswelliana*, 250:

I have observed that business has a different effect on the spirits of different men. It sinks the spirits of some and raises the spirits of others. To the spirits of some, a variety of affairs are like stones put into a pool of water, which make the water rise in proportion to the quantity of stones; to the spirits of others, affairs . . . are like sponges put into a pool of water, which suck it up. Men of great firmness can retain their vivacity amidst a multiplicity of business.

His spirits revived as soon as court rose (*Letters of B.*, 1. 236). In some moods, any occupation would “agitate him to feverishness,” and he would fluctuate from the highest to the lowest opinion of himself in the manner described in this essay; see *Hyp.* 25 n. 3; *Boswelliana*, 238; and *Letters of B.*, 1. 83:

I have not made two verses these last two months. I have the most inconstant mind in the world. At times I can hardly help believing myself a man of considerable parts; but, at other times, I insensibly fall into a state little better than that of a blockhead. You have praised the beginnings of my epistle to you, and I think with justice. I am afraid to go on with it for fear of the *fumum ex fulgore*.

See also *ibid.*, 1. 231, 253; 2. 353, 382, 397, 417, 422, 423, 432, 435, 440.

<sup>4</sup> Originally, *different*; corrected by Boswell's note, printed at the end of *Hyp.* 40. The misquotation from *Hamlet*, 1. 2. 133, suggests that Boswell had no ear for the true music of the Shakespearean line. This first soliloquy is a favorite with Boswell; see *Hyp.* 51.

<sup>5</sup> The theory of Bishop Berkeley (1685–1753) expressed in his *New Theory of Vision* (1709) and *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710). Boswell's comment here, as on the famous occasion when Johnson answered the theory at the expense of his own toes, is not so emphatic as Johnson's, but perhaps for that reason more worthy of philosophy (see *Hyp.* 65 n. 2). See also *Life of J.*, 3. 187; 4. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 6, 23, 25, 26, 63, 64, and notes. Boswell speaks of the “wretched

An extreme degree of irritability makes him liable to be hurt by every thing that approaches him in any respect. He is perpetually upon the fret; and though he is sensible that this renders him unmanly and pitiful he cannot help shewing it; and his consciousness that it is observed, exasperates him so, that there is great danger of his being harsh in his behaviour to all around him.

He is either so weakly timid as to be afraid of every thing in which there is a possibility of danger, or he starts into the extremes of rashness and desperation. He ruminates upon all the evils that can happen to man, and wonders that he has ever had a moment's tranquillity, as he never was nor ever can be secure.<sup>7</sup> The more he

changefulness" or the "sad unsettled state" of his mind in the *Life of J.*, 3. 219, *Boswelliana*, 283, and in *Letters of B.*, 1. 29, 77, 83, 86, 105, 118; 2. 433. It was possibly this distraction of mind which caused him to have so many schemes for different activities, without the power to organize them (*ibid.*, 1. 215); see his various projected works (*ibid.*, 1. 234, 260; 2. 280, 282, 322, 390; *Life of J.*, 1. 261; 2. 179, 248, 402 n. 4, 511; 3. 91, 122, 184, 257, 341, 471 n. 2; 5. 33, 103), and his jests at his own expense in *Boswelliana*, 224-25:

Boswell, who had a good deal of whim, used not only to form wild projects in his imagination, but would sometimes reduce them to practice. In his calm hours he said with great good humour, "There have been many people who built castles in the air, but I believe I am the first that ever attempted to live in them."

Boswell complained that he had too good a memory for trifles, which prevented his remembering things of consequence. "My head," said he, "is like a tavern, in which a club of low punch-drinkers have taken up the room that might have been filled with lords who drink Burgundy, but it is not in the landlord's power to dispossess them."

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 48, and *Letters of B.*, 1. 239:

While afflicted with melancholy, all the doubts which have ever disturbed thinking men, come upon me. I awake in the night, dreading annihilation, or being thrown into some horrible state of being. . . . My wife is an admirable companion for a man of my atrabilious temperament; for she has a good store of common sense and cheerfulness. She and my little daughters are very well; but you cannot imagine what apprehensions I have at times lest I should lose them, or they me, by death.

Boswell was apt to suffer from such fancies whenever he was at a distance from his family or friends, and received no letters (*ibid.*, 1. 247; *Life of J.*, 3. 5; 4. 437; *Hebr.*, 146, 264, 321). The death of his "dear dear Peggie" left him helpless before his moods; see *Letters of B.*, 2. 377, 380, 392, 397, 414, 415—especially 431:

Alas, I fear that my constitutional melancholy, which returns in such dismal fits and is now aggravated by the loss of my valuable wife, must prevent me from any permanent felicity in this life. I snatch *gratifications*; but have no *comfort*, at least very little. . . . I get bad rest in the night, and then I brood over all my complaints—the *sickly mind* which I have had from my early years—the disappointment of my hopes of success in life—the irrevocable separation between me and that excellent woman who was my cousin, my friend, and my wife—the embarrassment of my affairs—the disadvantage to my children in having so wretched a father—nay, the want of *absolute certainty* of being happy after death, the

thinks the more miserable he grows, and he may adopt the troubled exclamation in one of Dr. Young's tragedies:

"Auletes, seize me, force me to my chamber,  
There chain me down, and guard me from myself."<sup>8</sup>

Though his reason be entire enough, and he knows that his mind is sick, his gloomy imagination is so powerful that he cannot disentangle himself from its influence, and he is in effect persuaded that its hideous representations of life are true. In all other distresses there is the relief of hope. But it is the peculiar woe of melancholy, that hope hides itself in the dark cloud.

Could the Hypochondriack see any thing great or good or agreeable in the situation of others, he might by sympathy partake of their enjoyment. But his corrosive imagination destroys to his own view all that he contemplates. All that is illustrious in publick life, all that is amiable and endearing in society, all that is elegant in science and in arts, affect him just with the same indifference, and even contempt, as the pursuits of children affect rational men. His fancied elevation and extent of thought prove his bane; for he is deprived of the aid which his mind might have from sound and firm understandings, as he admits of none such. Even his humanity towards the distressed is apt to be made of no avail. For as he cannot even have the idea of happiness, it appears to him

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*sure prospect* of which is *frightful*. No more of this . . . I . . . called on old Macklin, the comedian, whom I found with a mind active and cheerful in his ninety second or third year. . . . Here sat I *forty years younger than him*, listless and desponding, and unable to rid my mind of a disagreeable sensation, as if I had been sitting in Edinburgh. . . . I much fear that to a speculating and very feeling mind all that life affords will at times appear of no effect. When I recal the infinite variety of scenes through which I have passed, in my moments of sound sensation, I am elated; but, in moments of depression, I either forget them all or they seem indifferent.

It was in the midst of this spiritual torpor that he completed the *Life of Johnson!* And even that was a source of fears; Boswell continues, in the same letter,

My *Life of Johnson* is at last drawing to a close. I am correcting the last sheet . . . I really hope to publish it on the 25 current. . . . I am at present in such bad spirits that I have every fear concerning it—that I may get no profit, nay, may lose—that the publick may be disappointed and think that I have done it poorly—that I may make many enemies, and even have quarrels. Yet perhaps the very reverse of all this may happen.

<sup>8</sup> *Busiris*, Act 3. *Auletes* was originally printed *Auletea*, and left uncorrected by Boswell. The punctuation of the following paragraph was also overlooked: the period after *the dark cloud* is the editor's, the typesetter having preferred a comma, and Boswell being indifferent.

immaterial whether they be relieved or not. Finding that his reason is not able to cope with his gloomy imagination, he doubts that he may have been under a delusion when it was cheerful; so that he does not even wish to be happy as formerly, since he cannot wish for what he apprehends is fallacious.<sup>9</sup>

In the multitude of such thoughts as these, when the Hypochondriack is sunk in helpless and hopeless wretchedness, if he has recourse only to his fellow creatures and to objects upon earth—How blessed is the relief which he may have from the divine comforts of religion! from the comforts of GOD, the Father of Spirits, the Creator and Governour of the Universe, whose mercy is over all his other works, and who graciously hears the prayers of the afflicted.

In order to have these comforts, which not only relieve but “delight the soul,” the Hypochondriack must take care to have the principles of our holy religion firmly established in his mind, when it is sound and clear, and by the habitual exercise of piety to strengthen it, so as that the flame may live even in the damp and

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Letters of B.*, 2. 284:

You and I and worthy Johnston will walk in the King's Park, and have all the good ideas we have ever possessed agreeably revived. Is it not curious that at times we are in so happy a frame that not the least trace of former misery or vexation is left upon the mind? But is not the contrary too experienced? Gracious Authour of our being! do thou bring us at length to steady felicity!

and *ibid.*, 1. 236:

You have a slow fever, I a raging one. While gloomy and fretful, and grossly indolent, I was shocked with the recollection of my good spirits, gayety, and activity, as a man with a headache is shocked by bright sunbeams.

See also *ibid.*, 1. 246; 2. 419, 423, 440–41, and the repeated distinction between gratifications and comforts, 2. 382, 431. Even his reading affected Boswell thus (*Life of J.*, 3. 360):

I told him, that his *Rasselas* had often made me unhappy; for it represented the misery of life so well, and so convincingly to a thinking mind, that if at any time the impression wore off, and I felt myself easy, I began to suspect some delusion.

At the end of his reflections on the silk-mill at Derby, Boswell is obviously offering arguments to defeat this gloomy mental habit (*Life of J.*, 3. 188):

We are apt to transfer to all around us our own gloom, without considering that at any given point of time there is, perhaps, as much youth and gaiety in the world as at another. Before I came into this life, in which I have had so many pleasant scenes, have not thousands and ten thousands of deaths and funerals happened, and have not families been in grief for their nearest relations? But have those dismal circumstances at all affected *me*? Why then should the gloomy scenes which I experience, or which I know, affect others? Let us guard against imagining that there is an end of felicity upon earth, when we ourselves grow old, or are unhappy.

foul vapour of melancholy. Dreadful beyond description is the state of the Hypochondriack who is bewildered in universal scepticism. But when the mind is sick and distressed, and has need of religion, that is not the time to acquire it. The understanding is then wavering, and the temper capricious; and the best arguments may be ineffectual against prejudice.

By religion the Hypochondriack will have his mind fixed upon one invariable object of veneration, will have his troubled thoughts calmed by the consideration that he is here in a state of trial, that to contribute his part in carrying on the plan of providence in this state of being is his duty, and that his sufferings however severe will be found beneficial to him in the other world, as having prepared him for the felicity of the saints above, which by some mysterious constitution, to be afterwards explained, requires in human beings a course of tribulation.<sup>10</sup> And in the mean time he will have celestial emanations imparted to him.

While writing this paper, I have by some gracious influence been insensibly relieved from the distress under which I laboured when I began it. May the same happy change be experienced by any of my readers, in the like affliction, is my sincere prayer.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 4, 6, 9, 14, 15, 17, 37, 40, 52, 64, 67. This explanation of the world as a place of trial, leading by definite progression to felicity hereafter, was Boswell's resource in all difficulties, vexations, and sorrows; cf. *Letters of B.*, 2. 306:

Could not infinite wisdom and goodness have made us less miserable, if not more happy? We must be content to "wait the great teacher Death, and God adore!"

It is to me clear *a priori* that your question may be answered in the affirmative, supposing us to be such machines as the fatalists maintain. But, as I think it nobler to be a free agent, struggling as we must, from some sad mysterious causes, I comfort myself with the Christian revelation of our being in a state of purification, and that we shall in course of time attain to felicity. It is delightful, Temple, to look forward to the period when you and I shall enjoy what we now imagine. In the mean time, let us be patient, and do what good we can.

He was increasingly certain that "there is no certain happiness in this state of being" (*ibid.*, 1. 221), and, frequently repeating his favorite quotation "wait the great teacher," looked forward only to "gleams of joy here, and a blaze hereafter"; see *Letters of B.*, 1. 98, 147, 221, 237-38, 267; 2. 284, 349, 361, 399, 431, 462; *Life of J.*, 2. 218; 3. 255; *Boswelliana*, 241.

No. XL. Jan. 1781.

## [ON PLEASURE]

Τὴν δὲ ἡδονὴν οἰδα ὡς ἔστι ποικίλον. —PLATO DIAG.<sup>1</sup>

I know what variety there is in Pleasure.

**T**HREE are certain words which from being most frequently used in a limited signification do not readily present to the mind their full and genuine meaning. Amongst these is the word *Pleasure*, which commonly suggests at first the idea of sensual gratification, so that to pronounce the word *Pleasure* by itself would alarm the delicate sensibility of a very modest lady. You may tell her that you are happy to have the *Pleasure* of seeing her, or may introduce the word into many such sentences, where its meaning is particularly specified by the rest of the words connected with it. But you must not talk of *Pleasure* simply. We all know what is meant by a *Man of Pleasure*, or a *Woman of Pleasure*.

Yet *Pleasure* is indeed a word of most extensive meaning. For it comprehends all things that are pleasing, all things that produce satisfaction, joy, or delight, and in general whatever we can perceive as an agreeable effect. It is therefore confining and debasing it when we refer it only to our senses.<sup>2</sup> The *Pleasure* of mind when

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Dialogues* (*Philebus*, 12). The magazine text gave τὴν for τὴν; ἡδονὴν for ἡδονὴν; οἰδα for οἶδα; ὡς for ὡς; ἔστι for ἔστι; ποικίλον for ποικίλον. Boswell made no corrections.

<sup>2</sup> As Dr. Johnson usually did; cf. the conversation on the subject in 1778 (*Life of J.*, 3. 279):

JOHNSON. “[Not to drink wine] is a diminution of pleasure, to be sure; but I do not say a diminution of happiness. There is more happiness in being rational.” BOSWELL. “But if we could have pleasure always, should not we be happy? The greatest part of men would compound for pleasure.” JOHNSON. “Supposing we could have pleasure always, an intellectual man would not compound for it. The greatest part of men would compound, because the greatest part of men are gross.” BOSWELL. “I allow there may be a greater pleasure than from wine. I have had more pleasure from your conversation, I have indeed; I assure you I have.” JOHNSON. “When we talk of pleasure, we mean sensual pleasure. When a man says, he had pleasure with a woman, he does not mean conversation, but something of a very different nature. Philosophers tell you, that pleasure is *contrary* to happiness.”

See also the discussion of the Doctor’s eulogy on Garrick (*ibid.*, 3. 441):

I objected also to what appears an anticlimax of praise, when contrasted with the preceding panegyrick,—“and diminished the stock of harmless pleasure!”—“Is not *harmless pleasure* very tame?” JOHNSON. “Nay, Sir, harmless pleasure is the highest praise. Pleasure is a word of dubious import; pleasure is in general dangerous, and pernicious to virtue; to be able therefore

we attain to it is the highest pleasure. But I am willing to partake of every Pleasure that is innocent, and I am to consider in this essay the variety of means by which mankind procure, or endeavour to procure, to themselves that which Pope enumerates amongst the epithets of

“Our Being’s end and aim.”<sup>3</sup>

Whatever may be the disputes as to the greater quantity of good or of evil in the world, it cannot be denied that human nature is so constituted, that the necessary and daily supplies of our wants afford a certain degree of pleasure. It may be argued that they afford only a relief from pain. But whether pain be an unavoidable preparative for Pleasure or not, it is clear that Pleasure is felt in that relief. To eat when one is hungry, to drink when one is thirsty, to rest when one is weary with labour, to go to sleep after long watching, are all unquestionably attended with pleasure. I do not say with an exquisite feeling of Pleasure; but that there is positive pleasure in every one of them experience has proved to all of us so often, that it would be in vain for any one to deny it.

But these are pleasures without having any intention of enjoyment; they are merely the consequences of certain situations, and they are in themselves so moderate, and we are so much habituated to them, that we are seldom sensible of them. In vain do some well-meaning moralists affirm to me, that there is more pleasure in eating plain food when one is hungry, than in tasting all the delicacies of an excellent table. I have tried both, and I am sure they are wrong.<sup>4</sup> Indeed if the proposition were true, it

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to furnish pleasure that is harmless, pleasure pure and unalloyed, is as great a power as man can possess.” This was, perhaps, as ingenious a defence as could be made; still, however, I was not satisfied.

See also Johnson’s commendation of *The Spectator* (*Life of Addison*):

No greater felicity can genius attain than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness; of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having “turned many to righteousness.”

<sup>3</sup> *Essay on Man*, 4. 1:

Oh Happiness! our being’s end and aim—  
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! whate’er thy name—  
That something still which prompts th’ eternal sigh . . . .

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 4, 8, 17, 20, 52, 58, and *Life of J.*, 3. 320:

General Oglethorpe declaimed against luxury. . . . . JOHNSON. “Hold, Sir; to be merely satisfied is not enough. It is in refinement and elegance that the civilized man differs from

would prove that man is capable of no greater enjoyment of any kind than in being relieved from the opposite pain to it; whereas I believe that every capacity of enjoyment may be increased to any amazing degree. And as all Pleasure depends very much on the imagination, any Pleasure may, by the warm and enlivening influence of that power, be refined and exalted to a pitch far beyond what persons of dull faculties can conceive.

Intentional Pleasure is of infinite variety. Plato, whose delicacy in Pleasure is proverbial, allows of that variety, in the motto of this paper. And Aristotle, lib. 10. cap. 5. *De Moribus*, illustrates it in his usual philosophical manner.

In my papers upon Cookery and upon Drinking, I have shewn that I am pretty well acquainted with the enjoyments of one, whom the French characterize by the phrase *bon vivant*, one who *lives well*, as is the English phrase. The truth is, that none have a keener relish of every species of pleasure than Hypochondriacks. Their "exacerbations of misery," as Dr. Johnson emphatically expresses himself, dispose them to enjoy with avidity.<sup>5</sup> And if in my papers upon Love I have chiefly considered its effects upon the mind, that will easily be perceived to have been owing to a proper wish to avoid such ideas as any of my readers might think gross or indecent; even now, when I treat professedly of Pleasure, I

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the savage. A great part of our industry, and all our ingenuity is exercised in procuring pleasure; and, Sir, a hungry man has not the same pleasure in eating a plain dinner, that a hungry man has in eating a luxurious dinner. You see I put the case fairly. A hungry man may have as much, nay, more pleasure in eating a plain dinner, than a man grown fastidious has in eating a luxurious dinner. But I suppose the man who decides between the two dinners, to be equally a hungry man."

See also *ibid.*, 2. 90:

Mrs. Thrale dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line,

"I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor."

JOHNSON. "Nay, my dear Lady, this will never do. . . . Smile with the simple;—what folly is that? And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich."

<sup>5</sup> For the hypochondriac's gaiety when in a sound state of mind, see *Hyp.* 23, 25, 37, 70; *Letters of B.*, 1. 85, 88, 222–23, 224, 248; 2. 290, 318; *Boswelliana*, 272.

The emphatic expression of Johnson was used in a sense somewhat different from that which Boswell gives it; cf. *The Rambler*, 114, on execution for trifling offenses:

Few among those that crowd in thousands to the legal massacre, and look with carelessness . . . on the utmost exacerbations of human society, would then be able to return without horrour and dejection.

shall hold it as my duty to say nothing of the highest sensual pleasure permitted to us, which *Vernet* in his *Tableau de l'amour conjugal*, tells us has been considered by a Christian saint, as a foretaste of the happiness of heaven,<sup>6</sup> and which the founder of a great religion in the east, exhibits as an allurement to the fancies of the faithful, in his Mahometan paradise. The Hypochondriack indulges the flattering hope, that his essays may appear in the library of the divine, in the drawing room of the matron, and on the toilet of the young lady.

Pleasure is the aim of mankind in every thing beyond what is merely necessary to remedy pain and inconvenience; so that in civilized society, even those who live in the most frugal manner, would startle should one fairly show them what a proportion of their time and expence is absolutely devoted to Pleasure.

This however, is very rational; for that Pleasure is not only the aim but the end of our being, seems to be philosophically demonstrable. Therefore all the labour and all the serious business of life should justly be considered only as the means to that end. That evil is perpetually mingling with our good, that pain is in a constant struggle with Pleasure in the existence of man, is but too true, and we must wait with pious patience for a future consummation of felicity. But in the mean-time it is our wisdom and our duty to make ourselves as happy as we can in our passage through this state of being, having always respect to the influence which our conduct may have upon our situation in a better state. This is the sum of unclouded, clear, religious morality.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The author is not *Vernet*, but *Venette*, Nicolas (1632?–1698), a French physician who, in spite of having become royal professor of anatomy and surgery, is chiefly remembered by his unscientific and popular *De la génération de l'homme, ou Tableau de l'amour conjugal*, full of shaky physiology and anatomy, and shady examples and illustrations. The work was first published under the name of *Salonici* in Amsterdam, 1687, and reprinted later under the author's own name in France, Germany, and England. It is sometimes attributed to Charles Patin, but without proof.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Letters of B.*, 2. 462:

I am conscious that I can expect only temporary alleviation of misery; and some gleams of enjoyment. But these it is my *right*, nay I think my *duty* to have.

“*Gayety is a duty when health requires it*,” wrote Johnson to Mrs. Aston in 1777 (*Letters of J.*, 2. 4 and notes); see also *ibid.*, 1. 193; 2. 68, 214, and *The*

Every man must, no doubt, exercise a discretionary power as to the particular discipline which he finds to be best for himself; and while I am of that opinion, I will not rashly condemn those who indulge in all the brilliant gaiety of life; nor will I despise those who sequester themselves. I can admire a fine lady as an angelick being, and venerate an ascetick as a spiritual hero.<sup>8</sup>

In the present state of my mind, it appears to me that variety

*Rambler*, 44, in which Religion explains that she is not all mortification and self-denying exercises:

To his lower faculties [man] must allow such gratifications as will, by refreshing him, invigorate his nobler pursuits. . . .

Suffering is no duty . . . nor pleasure a crime. . . . Return then with me from continual misery to moderate enjoyment and joyful alacrity. . . . Remember that the greatest honour you can pay to the Author of your being is by such a cheerful behaviour, as discovers a mind satisfied with his dispensations.

Much the same idea recurs in Doddridge's epigram, quoted with praise in *Hebr.*, 308:

Dr. Doddridge being mentioned, [Johnson] observed that "he was author of one of the finest epigrams in the English language. . . . The subject is his family motto,—*Dum vivimus, vivamus*; which, in its primary signification, is, to be sure, not very suitable to a Christian divine; but he paraphrased it thus:

Live while you live, the epicure would say,  
And seize the pleasures of the present day.  
Live, while you live, the sacred preacher cries,  
And give to God each moment as it flies.  
Lord, in my views let both united be;  
I live in pleasure, when I live to thee."

<sup>8</sup> Good authority for at least part of this statement; compare *Life of J.*, 3. 401-402:

As he was a zealous friend of subordination, he was at all times watchful to repress the vulgar cant against the manners of the great; "High people, Sir, (said he,) are the best; take a hundred ladies of quality, you'll find them better wives, better mothers, more willing to sacrifice their own pleasure to their children than a hundred other women. . . . Few lords will cheat; and if they do, they'll be ashamed of it: farmers cheat and are not ashamed of it: they have all the sensual vices too of the nobility. . . ." BOSWELL. "The notion of the world, Sir, however is, that the morals of women of quality are worse than those in lower stations." JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir, the licentiousness of one woman of quality makes more noise than that of a number of women in lower stations; then, Sir, you are to consider the malignity of women in the city against women of quality, which will make them believe anything of them. . . . No, Sir, so far as I have observed, the higher in rank, the richer ladies are, they are better instructed and more virtuous."

See also the opinion of Lord Chesterfield (*Letters to his Son*, I. 107):

Falsehood and dissimulation are certainly to be found at Courts; but where are they not to be found? Cottages have them as well as Courts; only with worse manners. . . . Whatever poets may write, or fools believe, of rural innocence and truth, and of the perfidy of Courts, this is most undoubtedly true—that shepherds and ministers are both men; their natures and passions the same, the modes of them only different.

The idea is repeated in *ibid.*, I. 448.

of Pleasure is beneficial; and I contemplate with satisfaction not only the rich stores of Pleasure supplied by nature, but the numberless modes of it which human ingenuity has in the progress of time brought to such perfection.<sup>9</sup> The gratifications of sight, taste, smell, and hearing, afforded by light, by colours, by diversities of shape, by fruits, by flowers, by the murmuring of waters, the hum of bees, the singing of birds, and all the objects around us. The multiplicity of dishes and wines, the contrivance, the elegance, and the splendour of houses, furniture, and equipages. The games which amuse and interest, the treasures of literature in so many and such extensive departments, the performances of eminent Painters and Musicians, the animated intercourse of private society, the dazzling effect of publick entertainments, and the luxurious intervals of repose, the finer Pleasures of imagination which Addison has so delightfully shown in the *Spectator*,<sup>10</sup> and the still more

<sup>9</sup> See also *Hyp.* 6, 52, 57, and notes. The visit to the silk-mill at Derby in 1777 is the source of a little essay comparable to this passage, in the *Life of J.*, 3. 186 ff.:

I am not very conversant with mechanicks; but the simplicity of this machine, and its multiplied operations, struck me with an agreeable surprize. I had learnt from Dr. Johnson, during this interview, not to think with a dejected indifference of the works of art, and the pleasures of life, because life is uncertain and short; but to consider such indifference as a failure of reason, a morbidness of mind; for happiness should be cultivated as much as we can, and the objects which are instrumental to it should be steadily considered as of importance, with a reference not only to ourselves, but to multitudes in successive ages.

See also *ibid.*, 1. 502; *Rasselas*, chap. 11, 32, on the “hunger of imagination” which can be appeased only by enlarging the range of information and activity; and *Letters of J.*, 2. 386:

Take therefore all opportunities of learning that offer themselves, however remote the matter may be from common life or common conversation. Look in Herschel’s telescope; go into a chymist’s laboratory; if you see a manufacturer at work, remark his operations. By this activity of attention, you will find in every place diversion and improvement.

See also *ibid.*, 1. 337, and Boswell’s letter to Zélide (*Letters of B.*, 1. 50):

Study history, plain and certain parts of knowledge, and above all endeavour to relish the common affairs of life. David Hume, who has thought as much as any man, who has been tortured on the metaphysical rack, who has walked the wilds of speculation, wisely and calmly concludes that the business of ordinary life is the proper employment of man.

Johnson had a “relish” for the “common affairs of life,” at which Boswell constantly marveled; see *Life of J.*, 3. 216, 383; *Hebr.*, 148, 244, 280, 284, 297, 300.

<sup>10</sup> In the continuous series, numbers 411–421 inclusive. In *The Spectator*, 146, the highest pleasure is said to be “reading sublime thoughts,” and Cicero is mentioned as a source of supply unfailing.

valuable enjoyments of the heart all contribute to temporary happiness; and whilst we gladly share in these Pleasures, let us not be disturbed as if Pleasure were wrong in itself, but look forward to that glorious period when we shall be received into the presence of HIM, "at whose right hand are Pleasures for evermore."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Psalms, 16. 11.* In his letter to Mlle de Zuylen, Boswell adopts an entirely opposite, even canting Puritanical tone (*Letters of B.*, 1. 48):

I heartily wish I could do you any real service. You will tell me, "You give me pleasure, Sir, and that is to me a very great service." My dear Zelide! let me prevail with you to give up your attachment to pleasure and to court the mild happiness. Believe me, God does not intend that we should have much pleasure in this world. But he has been kind enough to place us so that we may attain to a pleasing serenity, what one of our poets calls

The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy.

To be thus is, truly, to follow nature. They who seek for exquisite joy were allways deceived. If they obtain it, it is but for a moment. Their powers are destroyed by excess and they languish in a state of tedious infirmity. If they do not obtain it, they are wretched and fretfull; they swear that there is no happiness in life, because they have not experienced the fancied happiness which life denys.

No. XLI. Feb. 1781.

## [ON MARRIAGE]

*Tu tamen vel me autore mentem istam mutabis, & cœlibatu relicto, sterili  
ac parum humano vitæ instituto, sanctissimo conjugio indulgebis.*

—ERASMUS.

“But by my advice you shall change that resolution, and quitting celibacy,  
“a barren state of life little suited to human nature, shall indulge in  
“holy Matrimony.”

ERASMUS has written so well upon so many subjects, that his works alone might make a very good study for most men. But what I peculiarly admire in him is a pleasant serenity of mind that shows itself in the ease and vivacity with which he treats every lighter theme on which his thoughts have been employed. As he visited England, he may be considered as naturalized among the *literati* of this island; and indeed much has been done by them in his honour. Let me only mention his life by Dr. Jortin, and the heroick encomium upon him by Mr. Pope.<sup>1</sup>

Having been obliged to him for a motto to this paper, I have been led to introduce it with something said in praise of one of my most favourite writers. But I have taken care to stop short, lest I should not leave myself room enough for the subject of the present essay, which I mean should be Marriage.

Upon this subject, indeed, one may write volumes, because it is so extensive, and makes so essential a part of the history of mankind. I am to write upon it, as I have done upon other subjects, in the course of these my monthly lucubrations, with little system or order, but with a frankness of communication, and a benevolent wish to entertain, and perhaps in some degree instruct my readers.

There has perhaps been no period when Marriage was more

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Jortin (1698–1770), archdeacon of London, founded his *Life of Erasmus* (2 v., 1750, 1760) on the earlier biography of Jean Le Clerc. It was Dr. Jortin to whom Boswell's father and Lord Hailes appealed in 1760, in the hope that so eminent a man could wither James's youthful enthusiasm for the Roman Catholic faith; see Jortin's letter to Lord Hailes in Rogers's *Memoir of James Boswell (Boswelliana, 13)*.

Pope mentions Erasmus in his *Imitations of Horace*, 1. 65, and in his *Essay on Criticism*, 693.

the general topick of conversation than at present; when a celebrated popular preacher has ventured to publish under the title of *THELYPHTHORA*, an elaborate, nay, as he professes, a *religious* exhortation to the comforts of a plurality of women.<sup>2</sup> I am not going to enter upon the wide field of Marriage, in all its varieties in different parts of the globe. My reflections are to be limited to the good, plain institution established in our own country, with which we are all well acquainted; in short, to British Marriage as by law established. And, instead of attempting an answer to *Thelyphthora*, till I have more leisure to consider whether it is right or wrong, I shall in the mean time relate an anecdote which I had from grave authority. Mr. Blount, who wrote what he calls *The Oracles of Reason*, having lost his wife, fell in love with her sister, a very beautiful woman, and having composed with a great deal

<sup>2</sup> This is, I suspect, one of Boswell's easy references to books as if he knew them well, when as a matter of fact he had read only the reviews in his own magazine. This number of *The Hypochondriack* was printed in the London Magazine for February 1781; the issue for the preceding September had given the entire first chapter of *Thelyphthora* in the body of the periodical, and a long review of the first two volumes in the *Impartial Review of New Publications* at the back. (The third volume was reviewed in due time, June 1781.)

In the reviewer's opening paragraphs we learn the name of the author, and his reputation, which Boswell throws out so lightly:

From the dedication to the presidents . . . and other governors of the Asylum, Misericordia, Magdalene, and Lock Hospitals, institutions peculiarly calculated for the preservation or relief of the female sex, and from a variety of other circumstances, it is an indisputable fact, that the Reverend Mr. [Martin] Madan [1726–1790], chaplain to the Lock Hospital, formerly a counsellor at law, many years an admired, most popular preacher, and universally acknowledged to be a man of great learning, is the author.

The full title of the work (published 1780) is *Thelyphthora, or, a Treatise on Female Ruin, in its Causes, Effects, Consequences, Prevention, and Remedy; considered on the Basis of Divine Law: under the following heads: Marriage, Whoredom, Adultery, Polygamy, Divorce, etc.* The author's avowed and clear intention, expressed in the chapter reprinted in the London Magazine, is to do away with the sordid horrors of illicit relationship and to signally reduce the frequency of rape and seduction by recognizing the fundamental meaning of marriage, and making a man acknowledge and be responsible for every woman with whom he copulated. This is far from celebrating the comforts of a plurality of wives!

The book called forth numerous comments; the D.N.B. lists nineteen attacks upon it. A farce based on Madan's idea, entitled also *Thelyphthora*, was presented in March 1781. Comments on the book itself appear in the London Magazine, 52. 261, and the play is reviewed at length in the number for March 1781, the month after Boswell's essay.

of ingenuity a treatise to prove that it was lawful for him to marry her, he sent it to the Bishop of London, and afterwards waited upon his lordship to ask his opinion. The bishop did not wish to entangle himself in disputation; so he calmly said, "Your arguments, Mr. Blount, may be very good; but I'll tell you, if you marry the lady you will be hanged."<sup>3</sup>

To the subject of Marriage we may well apply the observation

<sup>3</sup> Charles Blount (1654-1693) was chiefly known as the author of such works as *Anima Mundi*; *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*—a work upholding primitive Christianity; *The . . . Books of Apollonius Tyaneus* and *Religio Laici* (said to be developed largely from works by Lord Herbert of Cherbury); and two pamphlets for which he owed much to Milton's *Areopagitica*. He had married at eighteen one Eleanora Tyrrel, and after her death would have married her sister, had it not been for the lady's scruples. Blount forthwith prepared a letter on the propriety of marrying two sisters successively (dated March 8, 1693), which was included in his *Oracles of Reason*, and was, no doubt, the impetus for the publication of that collection. It is said (*Biogr. Brit.*) to be more carefully composed than the other writings in the work, "with a great seeming spirit of candour, and as much learning as could be shewn upon the subject." This was probably the statement which Blount submitted to the Bishop—or, according to the *Biographia*, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and other churchmen. In despair at the opposition which he could not overcome, Blount committed suicide.

Tillotson was Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry Compton, Bishop of London, in 1693. The tone of the answer which Boswell quotes is sufficiently blunt to make the reference to the Bishop authentic; Compton, who had been in the army, always preserved something of a martial air, and according to his enemy James II, "talked more like a colonel than a bishop." Boswell's "grave authority" for the story may have been Bishop Beilby Porteus, whom he visited at Chester in 1779 (see *Hyp.* 69 n. 14).

It is interesting to follow the history of the law which Blount attempted to change. The first positive efforts to alter it began in the English Colonies, and in 1906, when a bill to render legal the marriage to a deceased wife's sister finally passed both houses of Parliament, it concerned only marriages of this type which had occurred in the Colonies. Candor and consistency required another bill to be passed in 1907, allowing the same privilege to Englishmen of England. Comparable bills had been proposed and rejected in 1850, 1855, 1856, 1858, 1859, 1861, 1862, 1866, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1875, 1879, 1880, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1886, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1896, 1898, 1900, 1901, 1902.

The stubborn conservatism which caused this long delay disregarded even the wishes of the royal family; the Prince of Wales voted in favor of the bills of 1879 and 1896, and it is said that Queen Victoria used all her personal influence to assure the success of such a measure, in order to marry Princess Beatrice to the widowed husband of Princess Alice (Latimer, *England in the 19th Century*).

which the *Spectator* so humorously returns to Sir Roger de Coverley, "Much may be said on both sides."<sup>4</sup> Erasmus amused himself in the way of *declamation* upon it in different views, by writing "*Suasoria de ineundo Matrimonio*—Arguments for entering into Marriage." And also "*De Matrimonio infelici*—of unhappy Marriage," by way of "*Præceptiunculæ generis dissuasorii*—little precepts of the dissuasive kind." And it is wonderful to observe the fertility of his imagination in bringing forth such a number of circumstances. The truth is, that were a man to resolve not to marry till he has fully settled in his mind, that it will be upon the whole for his greatest good, the numbers of mankind would decrease very rapidly; so that if Dr. Price<sup>5</sup> were to introduce *philosophy* into his calculations upon this subject, and conjecture what the effect of the increase of *reasoning* may be upon *future* population, the result might indeed be alarming. I trust however that our natural appetites and affections will long prove a sufficient counterbalance to the selfish disadvantages which cool judgement may discover in the connubial engagement.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The Spectator*, 122; Boswell quotes the phrase from memory, assigning it incorrectly. It was Sir Roger himself who gave the opinion, "with the air of a man who would not give his judgement rashly."

Boswell alludes to it again in a letter to John Wilkes (*Letters of B.*, 1. 73).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Price (1723–1791), a non-conformist minister, was best known as a writer upon moral and economic subjects. The publication of his papers on population in *Philosophical Transactions* for 1769 (originally a letter to Dr. Franklin on the expectation of lives, the increase of the race, and the population of London) is said to have drawn attention to the faulty calculations of recently established insurance benefit societies. He was a sturdy defender of the rights of the American colonies, and the publication of his *Observations on the Civil Liberty & the Justice and Policy of the War with America* (1776), with the added consideration that the work had a rapid sale, and that Price was given the freedom of the city of London as a result of it, is said to have had a share in determining the thirteen colonies to revolt. Price was in 1778 invited by Congress to come to America and assist in the financial operations of the new country; in 1783 he was, with Washington, created LL.D. by Yale College. His zeal for the French Revolution provoked Burke's attacks upon it, but Price died before its worst evils took place.

He appears again in *Hyp. 42*; in the *Life of J.*, 4. 242 (1783); and in *Boswelliana*, 301, where Boswell calls him *Lord Shelburne's Price*, "whom I love, and call *Pretium affectionis*."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hyp. 13*, 43, 46, and notes; *Life of J.*, 2. 190:

A question was started, whether the state of marriage was natural to man. JOHNSON. "Sir,

That Marriage should ever be respected by the wise and virtuous, is plain from the consideration, that it is the mode of continuing the human race in a regular and becoming manner. Man loves his species. He feels a pleasure in the contemplation of that multitude of beings of whom he is one; and he cannot but have a regard for an orderly institution to which he himself owes his education, and without which he is sensible that society would be a scene of gross and discordant confusion.

To consider one's self as a part of a general system, and to think of the good of the whole may have been carried to an absurd excess by the Stoicks of old, and by some philosophers of modern times who have assimilated their notions to those of that lofty sect. Yet it must be allowed, that much of our happiness arises from viewing our existence in that light. Voltaire in his *Candide* has unquestionably shown, by practical impressions stronger than any effects from induction, that a series of severe distresses will be felt by an individual notwithstanding all the boasted arguments of optimism. This however even Voltaire with all his wit could not but know, and indeed I believe his benevolence made him know it well, that the enjoyment of man is far from being merely selfish, but is in a considerable degree sympathetick. It extends itself to his wife and children, to his friends, to his countrymen,

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it is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage, that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connection, and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together."

This depressing opinion, observe, was given upon the *state* of marriage, the legal bondage to responsibilities which is usually the cause of such chilly hesitation as Boswell mentions in this essay and in *Hyp.* 46. Johnson agreed that "natural appetites and affections" would still result in this unnatural status; see *Life of J.*, 2. 540:

"You will recollect my saying . . . that I had often wondered why young women should marry, as they have so much more freedom . . . while unmarried, than when married. I indeed did not mention the *strong* reason for their marrying—the *mechanical* reason." BOSWELL. "Why that *is* a strong one. But does not imagination make it much more important than it is in reality? Is it not, to a certain degree, a delusion in us as well as in women?" JOHNSON. "Why yes, Sir; but it *is* a delusion that is always beginning again."

See also *ibid.*, 2. 117:

"It is not from reason and prudence that people marry, but from inclination. A man is poor; he thinks, 'I cannot be worse, and so I'll e'en take Peggy.'"

See also Johnson's defense of marriage as "the best state for a man in general" (*Life of J.*, 2. 524; *The Idler*, 87; *Rasselas*, chaps. 26, 28).

to all with whom he feels a connexion; and if his mind is enlarged enough, it extends itself to the whole human race.<sup>7</sup> There cannot be a more sublime expression of benevolence than the following line in Dr. Johnson's imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, where he incites to pray,

“For love which scarce collective man can fill.”

A man therefore may be induced to marry from the principle that he shall by doing so, have a better connexion with society, and add more good to the general system than by any other means. But the “*Officina gentium*—the work-shop of nations,” would be ill carried on, were only such extensive principles to operate. Ninety-nine of a hundred marry from the impulse of appetite, from immediate desire of a particular object. All who think it immoral to gratify the strongest natural inclination without the sanction of wedlock, and cannot or do not choose to repress it, must marry, and then do well; though Swift wittily says, that to take a wife to preserve one's chastity is like constantly wearing a Burgundy pitch plaister to preserve one's health.<sup>8</sup> Sir John Brute

<sup>7</sup> Boswell liked to consider himself one of the “few men whose minds are sufficiently enlarged to comprehend universal or even extensive good” (*Hyp.* 3). Cf. *Letters of B.*, 1. 214; *Life of J.*, 2. 350, in which he asserts his claim to be a *citizen of the world*; and *Hebr.*, 21:

I am, I flatter myself, completely a citizen of the world.—In my travels through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, France, I never felt myself from home; and I sincerely love “every kindred and tongue and people and nation.”

He perhaps took his cue from John Wilkes, to whom he wrote in 1765 (*Letters of B.*, 1. 72):

Even your compliments were excellent, and had full effect. You told me I was “the most liberal man you had ever met with, a citizen of the world, free from prejudices of any country, who would be liked in France as much as in Britain.”

When Boswell was abroad, he aspired to be an ambassador—an ambition which had been suggested to him by John Wilkes, probably on account of the qualities listed above (*Letters of B.*, 1. 74, 96); in his later years, his warm interest in the causes of the Americans and the Corsicans brought back his youthful ambition, and he sought appointment on commissions to both countries (*ibid.*, 2. 275, 455, 460).

<sup>8</sup> Boswell, quoting from memory, makes an addition to one of the quips in the prose miscellanies accompanying the *Martinus Scriblerus* papers (published by Swift and Pope in 1727). The jest is not Swift's, however; it appears in the division entitled *Thoughts on Various Subjects by Mr. Pope*, thus:

He who marries a wife because he cannot live chastely, is much like a man who, finding a few humours in his body, resolves to wear a perpetual blister.

in the *Provoked Wife*, coarsely but justly speaks out the most common motive for Marriage, "Why, I had a mind to lye with her, and she would not let me."<sup>9</sup> It is in vain to disguise, that the enjoyment of woman is the most general and the prime incentive to Marriage, when man is in his vigour. *Fielding* in one of his poems when treating of the choice of a wife, requires that she should be

"A warm partaker of the genial bed."<sup>10</sup>

Nay the more delicate *Guardian*, when recommending a lady to his young friend, tells him, "She will not be less an ornament to your table than give you pleasure in bed."<sup>11</sup>

That there are additional motives to Marriage, besides what I have ventured to specify as the chief, I shall not deny. I will even admit that it is frequently not perceived to be the "something which prompts,"<sup>12</sup> and also that in society highly civilized, the feelings of nature are so overwhelmed with artificial means of gratifying pride and pleasure, that they bear a very small proportion. Nor, am I so full of my own notion, as not to be sensible that the same man will have different motives for Marriage at different periods of his life. *Bastard*, a poet of some ingenuity and conceit, has the following Latin epigram on his three wives:<sup>13</sup>

*Terna mihi variis ducta est ætatibus uxor,  
Hæc Juveni, illa viro, tertia nupta seni.  
Prima est propter opus, teneris mihi juncta sub annis,  
Altera propter opes, tertia propter opem.*

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by memory from Act 2, scene 1. *The Provoked Wife* is a favorite with Boswell: he quotes it again in *Hyp.* 22.

<sup>10</sup> *To a Friend on the Choice of a Wife*, 260.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by memory from *The Guardian*, 26: ". . . her beauties will do as much honour to your table, as they will give you pleasure in your bed."

<sup>12</sup> Pope, *Essay on Man*, 4. 3; a fuller quotation of the same passage occurs in *Hyp.* 40.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Bastard (1566–1618) was chiefly known by his Latin epigrams (largely libelous), although he was also the author of *Magna Britannia*, a Latin poem in three books, and sundry occasional poems. Boswell's explanation of the Latin is taken almost *verbatim* from the account of Bastard in Kippis's *Biographia Britannica*; the epigram is quoted as given here, and followed by the paraphrase,

The meaning of which (for it is impossible to give the force of it in an English version)

The meaning of which is, he married the first in youth for love; the second in manhood for money; the third in old age for a nurse.

But I speak of Marriage as it most frequently happens, taking a view of mankind in general; of Marriage by which the world is continually furnished with new supplies of people; and I maintain that we owe it to the natural desire which is so exceedingly strong and prevalent. The motive of interest affects but a very limited number. The celebrated line in *Garth's* epilogue to *Cato*

“ ’Tis best repenting in a coach and six,”

is the sentiment of a fine lady, and there are comparatively speaking but few fine ladies. I have found an excellent contrast to it, which I consider as the sentiment of women whose passions have fair play. *Fielding's* *Harriot*, a lovely natural character of a young girl in the *Authour's Farce*, says to her lover

“And thy arms my coach and six.”<sup>14</sup>

A fine figure to express enthusiastick fondness.

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is, that he married his first wife in his youth, for *love*; his second, when he was grown a man, for *money*; and his third, in his old age, for a *nurse*.

For Boswell's delight in the *Biographia*, see *Hyp.* 6 n. 17.

<sup>14</sup> From the song in Act 1, Scene 3:

All these I would attempt for thee,  
Could I but thy passion fix;  
Thy will, my sole commander be,  
And thy arms my coach and six.

No. XLII. March 1781.

[ ON MARRIAGE—*Continued* ]

”Ατοπον οὖν τὸ γυναιξὶν ἀρετῆς φάναι μηδ' ἄλλης μετεῖναι. τί δὲ δεῖ λέγειν περὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ συνέσεως αὐτῶν, ἔτι δὲ πίστεως καὶ δικαιοσύνης, ὅπου καὶ τὸ ἀνδρεῖον καὶ τὸ θαρραλέον καὶ τὸ μεγαλόψυχον ἐν πολλαῖς ἐπιφανὲς γέγονε; [φάναι δὲ] πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα καλὰ τὴν φύσιν αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' ἡ ψέγοντας εἰς μόνην φιλίαν ἀνάρμοστον ἀποφαίνειν παντάπασι δεινόν.

—PLUTARCH ERATICOS.<sup>1</sup>

“But to detract virtue from the character of women is certainly repugnant to reason. For since their chastity, prudence, fidelity, justice, nay, “fortitude, resolution, and magnanimity shine forth in many remarkable instances, it is plainly foolish to say with a view to lessen them, that “their nature which is so well adapted to all other offices, is incapable of “friendship.”

**C**IVILIANS define Marriage, “*Coniunctio maris et feminæ individuam vitæ consuetudinem continens*—The union of a man and a woman comprehending one common train of life,” which in Thomson’s poetry is, without any reference to law, thus express’d:

—“In one fate  
Their lives, their fortunes, and their beings blend.”

Canonists define it, “*Coniunctio maris et feminæ, consortium omnis vitæ divini et humani juris communicatio*—The union of a man and woman, a society for the whole of life, a participation of rights temporal and spiritual.”<sup>1a</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The magazine text rendered the source of the passage “Plutarch Eraticos” without distinction between the work and the author, and made these errors, for which Boswell left no correction: οὖν for οὖν; γυναιξὶν for γυναιξὶν; μηδ’ for μηδ’; ἄλλης for ἄλλης; μετεῖναι τι δει λέγειν περὶ δε for μετεῖναι τί δὲ δεῖ λέγειν περὶ; συνέσεως αυτῶν for συνέσεως αὐτῶν; ετι δε πιζεως for ἔτι δὲ πίστεως; οπου for ὅπου; πο for τὸ; ανδρειον for ἀνδρεῖον; θαρραλεον for θαρραλέον; εν for ἐν; πολλαις for πολλαῖς; επιφανες for ἐπιφανὲς; φάναι δὲ omitted after γέγονε; κατὶ for καλὰ; την φυσιν for τὴν φύσιν; ψέγονται for ψέγοντας; μονην for μόνην; φιλια for φιλίαν; ανάρμοστον for ἀνάρμοστον; πανταπασιν for παντάπασι; δεινον for δεινόν.

<sup>1a</sup> The lines from Thomson occur in *The Seasons (Spring)*.

Boswell evidently preferred the canonists’ definition; he quotes it in a letter to John Wilkes in 1765 (*Letters of B.*, 1. 82):

It is curious to compare with these definitions a modern Marriage, as appearing in the practice of many splendid couples in this metropolis. They instead of having one common train of life, contrive it so as very seldom to approach each other. A husband is so far from being the sole cause of comfort and happiness in the matrimonial state, that he is only like the master or superintendent of a great manufactory, and the beneficial effect of subdivision of labour, upon which Dr. Adam Smith insists so much, in his *Wealth of Nations*, seems to be assumed in the connubial copartnery.

What we lawyers call the *consortium [o]mnis vitae* is the most comfortable of [a]ll ideas, and I hope I shall one day [te]ll you so from experience.

Marriage and divorce in England were subject to this cumbrous double system of canon and civil regulation until 1857, when Sir Richard Bethell's Court of Probate Act transferred the jurisdiction of all ecclesiastical courts to the lay court created by the act. (The Judicature Act of 1873 merged the court of probate in the probate, divorce, and admiralty division of the High Court of Justice.) The extreme confusion and awkwardness of the twofold administration may be seen in the ironic advice of Justice Maule to a prisoner accused of bigamy, in a court address which is said to have given impetus to the needed reform:

"... You should have gone to the ecclesiastical court and there obtained against your wife a decree *a mensa et thoro*. You should then have brought an action in the courts of common law and recovered, as no doubt you would have recovered, damages against your wife's paramour. Armed with these decrees, you should have approached the legislature and obtained an act of parliament which would have rendered you free and legally competent to marry the person whom you have taken on yourself to marry with no such sanction. It is quite true that these proceedings would have cost you many hundreds of pounds, whereas you probably have not as many pence. But the law knows no distinction between rich and poor. The sentence of the court upon you, therefore, is that you be imprisoned for one day, which period has already been exceeded, as you have been in custody since the commencement of the assizes." (*Enc. Brit.*, 8. 339.)

The slow march of English reform is shown in the fact that as early as 1697, the separation of the Earl and Countess of Macclesfield had suggested the possibility of brief and effective civil administration of law on marriage; see Johnson's *Life of Savage* and note:

[The Earl was] no less desirous of separation . . . . , and he prosecuted his design in the most effectual manner; for he applied not to the ecclesiastical courts for a divorce, but to the parliament for an act, by which his marriage might be dissolved, the nuptial contract annulled, and the children of his wife illegitimated. This act, after the usual deliberation, he obtained, though without the approbation of some, who considered marriage as an affair only cognizable by ecclesiastical judges.

[Note in edition of 1791]:

The following protest is registered in the books of the House of Lords.

DISSENTIENT.

Because we conceive that this is the first bill of that nature that hath passed, where there was not a divorce first obtained in the Spiritual Court; which we look upon as an ill precedent, and may be of dangerous consequence in the future.

HALIFAX.

ROCHESTER.

Different men attend a lady to different places of amusement; and conversation being shared with numbers, there is a gay variety, instead of the uniform dullness of frequent intercourse with the same person. Neither is it thought of any advantage to have an attention to fortune as a fund common to both, since each can with less care, take occasionally what is wanted, as the birds peck at large, wherever they fly and hop about.

If happiness be not promoted by Marriage, it is undoubtedly a bad institution; and superficial thinkers easily adopt the opinion that it is not. Accordingly we find the wits and the poets have employed the shafts of their ridicule upon no subject more freely, than upon this. Yet Marriage stands its ground, and even the greatest part of the railers against it are observed to conform to it like other mortals. The explanation is obvious. A slight prospect takes in only restraint and all its concomitant ideas. A steady view discovers the real advantages.

It is a thoughtless error to conceive of Marriage, as of a state altogether of enjoyment, and not "for better for worse," as the form for celebration of matrimony bears.<sup>2</sup> This error however has afforded much play both to raw imagination and licentious fancy. One is deceived by finding that it is not what was ignorantly supposed. The other concludes that when high enjoyment ceases, the contract is at an end.

Of the latter species there is a fine lively instance, in a song in Dryden's *Marriage A-la-mode*:

"Why should a foolish Marriage vow  
 Which long ago was made,  
 Oblige us to each other now  
 When passion is decay'd.  
 We lov'd and we lov'd as long as we could,  
 Till our love was lov'd out of us both,  
 But our Marriage is dead when the pleasures are fled;  
 'Twas pleasure first made it an oath."

The same free thought is exhibited in a less elegant, but very characteristical manner, in *Carey's Beggar's Wedding*, a ballad farce.

<sup>2</sup> This construction, which in modern English seems unfinished without "witness" or some equivalent complement, is sufficient for Boswell as it stands. He uses the idiom again in *Hyp. 62.*

"Like jolly beggars thus we live,  
 Since now the wedding's o'er,  
 We'll love and live, and live and love,  
 Till we can love no more.  
 In life we'll love, in freedom live,  
 In loving live our fill,  
 For I to you will constant prove—  
 Or part whene'er you will."<sup>3</sup>

To beings of levity such sallies are admirably suited. But human nature is not in general devoid of settled thinking. Though man be distinguished as a risible animal,<sup>4</sup> there is not a large portion of his existence spent in laughter. In his early years indeed he has much of it. But in his early years he is an imperfect animal—He is green—He is not substantiated. And it will be allowed that men who after arriving at the full age of reason are continual laughers, have no credit by their merriment, but are with justice looked upon as foolish. Man is not more distinguished as a risible, than as a reasoning animal, and the longer he lives he approaches the more to steadiness. Therefore when a man and a woman have lived together for years, and they have gradually become habituated to each other, they will not feel disagreeably the change from livelier sensations of pleasure to comfortable satisfactions, nor regret that love has grown into friendship.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The *Biographia Dramatica* assigns this work to Charles Coffey (d. 1745), an Irishman, who seems to have borrowed parts of it from Brome's *Jovial Crew* (for which see *Hyp.* 12). It was first produced in 1729 and was revived in 1763.

<sup>4</sup> See *Hyp.* 44, 62 n. 12, for a repetition of this distinction. Boswell is again making assertions which do not square with his nature. Compare this passage to *Hyp.* 23 and 62, on the hypochondriac's need of training in restraint, and contrast it to the more characteristic expressions of *Hyp.* 25, 37, 38, concerning the need of mirth and entertainment.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 43; *Rasselas*, chap. 29; *The Rambler*, 45; and also *The Spectator*, 479:

The truth is, we generally make love in a style and with sentiments very unfit for ordinary life: they are half theatrical and half romantic. By this means we raise our imaginations to what is not to be expected in human life; and, because we did not beforehand think of the creature we are enamoured of, as subject to dishonour, age, sickness, impatience, or sullenness, but altogether considered her as the object of joy; human nature itself is often imputed to her as her particular imperfection, or defect.

I take it to be a rule, proper to be observed in all occurrences of life, but more especially in the domestic, or matrimonial part of it, to preserve always a disposition to be pleased. This cannot be supported but by considering things in their right light, and as Nature has formed

There is in human nature a love of permanency, as well as a love of variety. Identity of person is absolutely requisite in the idea of happiness, though the person must no doubt have changes of sensation to exist agreeably. There is an *egotism* in this view which is not only valuable, but without which man is nothing. As the soul "Startles at destruction," no thinking person, though in a state of little enjoyment, would be content to sink into annihilation upon condition of rising into a much more happy state without any consciousness of former existence. If *I* am destroyed it is of no consequence to me, that *another* being in lieu of me has a large share of felicity. This love of permanency, with reference to ourselves, extends itself also to objects with which we are intimately connected. Even inanimate objects so circumstanced, have a certain hold of our affection; and no man, unless of a rugged cast

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them, and not as our own fancies or appetites would have them. He then who took a young lady to his bed, with no other consideration than the expectation of scenes of dalliance, and thought of her (as I said before) only as she was to administer to the gratification of desire; as that desire flags, will, without her fault, think her charms and her merit abated; from hence must follow indifference, dislike, peevishness, and rage. But the man who brings his reason to support his passion, and beholds what he loves as liable to all the calamities of human life, both in body and mind, and even at the best what must bring upon him new cares, and new relations; such a lover, I say, will form himself accordingly, and adapt his mind to the nature of his circumstances. This latter person will be prepared to be a father, a friend, an advocate, a steward for people yet unborn, and has proper affections ready for every incident in the marriage state.

Boswell speaks in much the same strain in his letters to Temple in 1767; cf. *Letters of B.*, I. 99:

A bachelor has an easy unconcerned behaviour which is more taking with the generality of the world than the behaviour of a married man possibly can be, if he acts in character. The bachelor has a carelessness of disposition which pleases every body, and every body thinks him a sort of a common good, *nunc mihi, nunc aliis benignus*, a feather which flys about and lights now here, now there. And accordingly the connections of a bachelor are allways most extensive. Whereas, a married man has a settled plan, a certain degree of care, and has his affections collected by one great attachment, and therefore he cannot be such good company to every body he meets. But, in my opinion, after a certain time of life a man is not so desirous of this general flutter. The mind becomes more composed and requires some settled satisfaction on which it can repose. I am sensible that everything depends on the light in which we view it; and nothing more so than marriage. If you think of that weariness which must at times hang over every kind of society, those disgusts and vexations which will happen in the intercourse of life, you will be frightened to take upon you the serious charge of the father of a family. But if you think of the comforts of a home where you are a sort of sovereign, the kind endearments of an amiable woman, who has no wish but to make you happy, the amusement of seeing your children grow up from infancy to manhood, and the pleasing pride of being the father of brave and of learned men, all which may be the case and depends much upon our conduct as fathers—then marriage is truly the condition in which true felicity is to be found. I think we may strike a good medium. Let us keep in mind the *nil admirari* and not expect too much.

See also *ibid.*, I. 125.

indeed, ever quitted a house in which he had lived long, and did not feel some regret. How much stronger then must it be, when applicable to a *wife*, "the most delightful name in nature," as the *Spectator* with an amiable moral ambition has shewn it to be.<sup>6</sup> Horace extends the conjugal union of felicity to the last moment of this life,

*Felices ter et amplius  
Quos irrupta tenet copula, nec malis  
Divulsus querimoniis  
Suprema citius solvet amor die.<sup>7</sup>*

"Thrice happy they whom love unites  
In equal rapture, and sincere delights,  
Unbroken by complaints or strife,  
Even to the latest hours of life." FRANCIS.

But we carry our love of permanency still farther, and please ourselves with an anxious hope that an agreeable union may be continued even in a future state of existence. That this was the popular notion of the Jews, appears from their questioning our Saviour, Whose wife a woman who had many husbands in succession, should be at the resurrection? He tells them, that "at the resurrection there is neither Marrying nor giving away in Marriage, but that they shall be like the angels in Heaven."<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> In Number 490.

<sup>7</sup> *Odes*, I. 13. 17. A favorite quotation; Boswell introduces it again in the letter to Wilkes cited above (n. 2). For a biographical note on the translator, see *Hyp.* 66 n. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Mtth.*, 22. 30; but see also *Mark*, 12. 25, and *Luke*, 20. 35. The distress which Boswell imagines in the mind of the loyal spouse at the idea of separation became a sad truth in his own case; cf. *Letters of B.*, 2. 377-78:

My grief preys upon me night and day. I am amazed when I look back. Though I often and often dreaded this loss, I had no conception how distressing it would be. May God have mercy upon me. I am quite restless and feeble and desponding. . . . Such is my melancholy frame at present, that I waver as to all my plans. I have an *avidity* for death. I eagerly wish to be laid by my dear dear wife. Years of life seem insupportable. . . . O! my friend! what would I now give for one of those years with my dearest cousin, friend, and wife, which are past. May I not flatter myself with a dawn of hope that I shall be permitted to see her again, ay, and to be with her, not to be separated? *What* can one think? *What* can one do in so wretched a state as this? She used on all occasions to be my comforter. She, methinks, could now suggest rational thoughts to me. But *where* is she? O my Temple, I am miserable.

See also *ibid.*, 2. 373, 381, 435, 440, 445.

notion, however, though thus corrected by the highest authority, still prevails, and will be found in many good Christians, especially in those of a warm poetical mind, who utter it in elegies and in epitaphs; and I doubt not that where there is a lasting love Marriage, it would be exceedingly distressing to both of the parties to be convinced that when death does them part, their union is dissolved for ever, and that they shall thenceforward exist as separate and unconnected beings. I know the passage of scripture which I have now quoted gave myself a painful solicitude, till I considered that our Saviour could only mean to say that in the world to come there is not marriage as in this world, as the states of being are so different. But that this does not preclude that refined union of souls, that celestial intimacy, which from peculiar attachment by friendship, and love in this life, may subsist in a higher state of perfection in the life everlasting. Dr. Price's dissertation upon the reasonable hopes which we may entertain of enjoying the society of our friends in a future state, is one of the most comfortable works of that worthy man.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For biographical note, see *Hyp.* 41 n. 5. Boswell probably alludes to Price's *Junction of Virtuous Men in a Future State* (1769), which attracted to him his powerful friend Lord Shelburne.

No. XLIII. April 1781.

[ON MARRIAGE—*Concluded*]

*Nos sanè nuptiarum vota non asperranter accipimus.*

Epiſt. SIRICII PAPÆ in BARON. Annal.<sup>1</sup>

“We certainly have not received nuptial vows slightingly.”

I OWN I am one of those who think Marriage a good thing; and that if human happiness is not increased by it, the fault is not in that institution but in the parties. After having for many years cherished a system of marrying for money, I at last totally departed from it, and marryed for love. But the truth was, that I had not been careful enough to weed my mind; for while I cultivated the plant of interest, love all the time grew up along with it and fairly got the better.<sup>2</sup> Naturally somewhat singular, independent of any additions which affectation and vanity may perhaps have made, I resolved to have a more pleasing species of Marriage than common, and bargained with my bride, that I should not be bound to live with her longer than I really inclined; and that whenever I tired of her domestick society, I should be at liberty to give it up. Eleven years have elapsed, and I have never yet wished

<sup>1</sup> The epistles of the Pope, St. Siricius (334?–399), in *Annales Ecclesiastici* by Cardinal Cesare de Barono, or Baronius (1538–1607).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Letters of B.*, 2. 369—“You will recollect, my Temple, how our marriage was the result of an attachment truly romantick.” Not only in his early years, but in his considerations of marriage throughout his life, Boswell frankly held fortune to be a desideratum, although “Heaven knows that sordid motive is farthest from my thoughts”—see *Letters of B.*, 1. 3, 109, 112, 150, 162, 165; 2. 300, 400, 432, 439. He was in this regard no different from every man of his period and class in society, although his phrasing in this essay implies that he thought he was; see n. 6 following.

Margaret Montgomerie, Boswell’s cousin, whom he married shortly after he had been professing the warmest attachment to two lovely heiresses, was “a pen-niles lass wi’ a lang pedigree,” and it is obvious that after her romantic marriage to Boswell, they were both made to feel Lord Auchinleck’s disapproval of her poverty; see *Letters of B.*, 1. 235:

My father is most unhappily dissatisfied with me. My wife and I dined with him on Saturday. He did not salute her, though he had not seen her for three months; nor did he so much as ask how she did; though she is pretty big with child. I understand he fancies that if I had married another woman, I might not only have had a better portion with her, but might have been kept from what he thinks idle and extravagant conduct.

to take advantage of my stipulated privilege.<sup>3</sup> Children no doubt connect man and wife most agreeably, and we have some fine ones, whom we love with mutual fondness.<sup>4</sup> I used to tell a pretty woman of my acquaintance, who had no mind for the charms of gallantry, that her children were effectual talismans against the magick of seduction; and I never shall forget a very just and a

<sup>3</sup> Boswell and Temple had "often talked how nice [they] would be in such a choice," and in the description of Miss W——t Boswell draws his ideal of 1758, a young person "extreamly pretty, and posest of every amiable qualification," who "dances, sings, and plays upon several instruments equally well, draws with a great deal of taste, and reads the best authours," besides having "a just regard to true piety and religion" (*Letters of B.*, 1. 3). In the *Life of J.*, 2. 87, when Boswell "had promised [himself] a great deal of instructive conversation . . . on the conduct of the married state, of which [he] had then a near prospect" (1769), all he succeeded in drawing from Johnson was the assertion, "contrary to the common notion, that a woman would not be the worse wife for being learned; in which," Boswell adds, "from all that I have observed of Artemisia, I humbly differed from him." In 1766 he had told Wilkes that he "set a higher value on the qualittys of the heart than on those of the head" (*Letters of B.*, 1. 90).

He was married to his unlearned, unaccomplished, unbeautiful, but patient, shrewd, and humorous Margaret on November 25, 1769. She had stood by while Boswell paid ardent court to her Irish kinswoman, had accompanied him to Ireland on a visit to the charmer, and had evidently grown upon him because of her sympathy; Boswell's proposal of marriage was probably the result of this patient kindness (cf. *Letters of B.*, 1. 170-173), which obviously continued throughout their married life. Boswell's references to his wife are always more affectionate than romantically passionate, but no doubt the quiet placidity of her companionship was a relief to his feverish mental activity. On the tour to Ireland he writes of her conversation, "Indeed it is such as nourishes me, and like sweet milk tempers and smooths my agitated mind" (*Letters of B.*, 1. 170); later it is evident that sometimes he luxuriously enjoyed his fits of gloom because they provoked her sympathy (*ibid.*, 1. 180, 236, 239)—and by 1773 he records of her kindness to Dr. Johnson (*Hebr.*, 26),

This I cannot but gratefully mention, as one of a thousand obligations which I owe her, since the great obligation of her being pleased to accept of me as her husband.

See also *ibid.*, 58, 450; *Life of J.*, 2. 161 n. 1; 3. 182 n. 1; *Letters of B.*, 2. 276, 283, 295, 358, 370. For his pathetic helplessness after the death of Mrs. Boswell, whom he alludes to as "my cousin, my friend, my wife," see *Hyp.* 42 n. 9.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Life of J.*, Boswell avoids this careless use of *mutual*; his acknowledgment to Thomas Warton for allowing him to have some of Johnson's correspondence contains the words, "furnished me with several of our common friend's letters" (*Life of J.*, 1. 313).

Five of Boswell's children lived to maturity. Veronica (1773-1795), who

very ready remark of an old friend of mine some years ago, when I was endeavouring to argue for occasional and transient amorous connections, and had recourse to the common similitude of the birds, the happy tenants of the grove, who unite for a season,

—And when the fit's o'er,  
'Tis a hundred to one that they never meet more.

“A pair of birds (said he) continue together till they have educated their offspring. Do you and your spouse follow their example so far, and I will give you leave to part after that.”<sup>5</sup> There was both quickness of penetration and a knowledge of human nature in the remark. When two spouses have lived in matrimonial intimacy till their family is grown up, it will rarely happen that a separation would be agreeable. They are then become necessary to each other's happiness from habit.

The primary intention of Marriage is the most perfect gratification of love and friendship between the sexes. All other considerations should be subordinate to this; and where other considerations have the ascendancy in the conjugal union, it is not properly Marriage, but something else under that name.<sup>6</sup>

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was born on the night that *She Stoops to Conquer* was first presented, and who was to receive additional fortune because in her infancy she liked Dr. Johnson, survived her father only a few months. Euphemia (1774–1833?), whose notions and habits became increasingly erratic, launched herself as author and composer, endeavoring to attract attention to her works by unconscious and painful caricature of her father's bustling methods of publicity. Alexander (1775–1822), created a baronet in 1821, produced poems and songs of some merit, but his talent for satire brought him to his death through a duel—a month after the death of his only brother. James (1778–1822) became a member of the English Bar, and acted as literary executor of Edmund Malone. Elizabeth (1780–1814) seems to have been undistinguished, except for her father's remark when she was nine years old that she was “very pretty and very clever” (*Letters of B.*, 2. 383). For Boswell's attitude toward his children see *Hyp.* 45 and notes.

<sup>5</sup> This anecdote is unmistakably Johnsonian. It probably followed a conversation on such topics as those discussed in notes 12 and 13 below.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 13, 41. In all of these passages, Boswell is diverging from one of Johnson's most emphatic expressions (*Life of J.*, 2. 528):

BOSWELL. “Pray, Sir, do you not suppose that there are fifty women in the world, with any one of whom a man may be as happy, as with any one woman in particular.” JOHNSON. “Ay, Sir, fifty thousand.” BOSWELL. “Then, Sir, you are not of opinion with some who imagine that certain men and women are made for each other; and that they cannot be happy

Accordingly we should be careful never to imagine, that the wedding-day is the burial of love, but that in reality love then begins its best life; and if we set out upon that principle, and are mindful to keep it up, and give due attention and aid to the progress of love thus brought into the well ordered well sheltered garden, we may enjoy I believe as much happiness as is consistent with the imperfection of our present state of being.<sup>7</sup>

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if they miss their counterparts." JOHNSON. "To be sure not, Sir. I believe marriages would in general be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the Lord Chancellor, upon a due consideration of characters and circumstances, without the parties having any choice in the matter."

See also *ibid.*, 3. 3—"It is commonly a weak man who marries for love," and the ensuing argument for marrying a fortune. However, Johnson himself married for love (*Life of J.*, I. 110 ff., 273 ff.), and on more than one occasion, advocated a freedom of choice, at least; see *Letters of J.*, I. 217:

There wanders about the world a wild notion, which extends over marriage more than over any other transaction. If Miss \*\*\*\* followed a trade, would it be said that she was bound in conscience to give or refuse credit at her father's choice? And is not marriage a thing in which she is more interested, and has therefore more right of choice?

Further remarks upon the young person's right to marry following his own inclination occur in the *Life of J.*, I. 401; 3. 429; and *The Rambler*, 39:

It may be urged in extenuation of this crime which parents, not in any other respect to be numbered with robbers and assassins, frequently commit, that, in their estimation, riches and happiness are equivalent terms.

<sup>7</sup> In early letters to Temple, Boswell employs the same strong phrasing that he uses in this essay, on marriage as the only hope of earthly happiness. "Not only will you be happy," he writes in 1767, "but you will make your friend so too, by showing him the way to calm and permanent felicity, as far as this life will allow." Speaking of one of his various courtships, he writes in 1768, "I do hope the period of my perfect felicity as far as this state of being can afford, is now in view." (*Letters of B.*, I. 125, 164. See also his letter to Wilkes, *Hyp.* 42 n. 2.)

Cf. the opinion of Johnson, in *Life of J.*, I. 442:

I do not, however, pretend to have discovered that life has any thing more to be desired than a prudent and virtuous marriage.

See also *The Rambler*, 116:

.... I am so far from thinking meanly of marriage, that I believe it able to afford the highest happiness decreed to our present state.

The paragraph in Boswell's text is an answer point for point to the passage in *Hyp.* 13 contrasting love and marriage:

Whatever respect I have for the institution of marriage, and however much I am convinced that upon the whole it produces rational happiness, I cannot but be of opinion that the passion of Love has been improperly feigned as continuing long after the conjugal knot has been tied. .... I do not limit its existence to any precise portion of time, either with the French poet *que le jour du mariage fut le tombeau de l'amour*, that the day of marriage was





From the painting by Hogarth

*David Garrick and His Wife*

Mr. Murphy's comedy called *The Way to keep Him* has, in my opinion, much merit, not only on account of the probability of the story and sprightliness of the dialogue, but on account of the excellent moral instruction which it affords. For the happiness of the married state must not be left to mere chance. Man and wife must not live at random. There must be attention without restraint, and study without trouble, a certain easy management which adapts itself to the variations of life. Mr. Garrick's song introduced into that comedy is delicately and pleasantly didactive.<sup>8</sup> Indeed no man had a better right to give counsel for matrimonial happiness as no man enjoyed it more than he did, though without the blessing of children.<sup>9</sup> Nor must I neglect to praise Mr. White-

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the tomb of Love; or with the proverbial expression, that it lasts no longer than the honeymoon. But it is surely very short.

<sup>8</sup> The moral instruction of Murphy's comedy is summed up in the closing lines of the play:

If this business were known in the world, . . . . the ladies would learn, that, after the marriage rites, they should not suffer their powers of pleasing to languish away, but should still remember to sacrifice to the Graces:

To win a man, when all your pains succeed,  
THE WAY TO KEEP HIM is a task indeed.

Garrick's *Song for Mrs. Cibber written at the Revival of the Play*, implies sacrifices not only to the Graces but to Juno and Minerva:

Ye fair married dames, who so often deplore  
That a lover once blest is a lover no more,  
Attend to my counsel, nor blush to be taught  
That prudence must cherish what beauty has caught.

The bloom of your cheek, and the glance of your eye,  
Your roses and lilies may make the men sigh;  
But roses, and lilies, and sighs pass away,  
And passion will die, as your beauties decay.

Use the man that you wed like your fav'rite guitar,  
Tho' music in both, they are both apt to jar;  
How tuneful and soft from a delicate touch,  
Not handled too roughly, nor play'd on too much.

The sparrow and linnet will feed from your hand,  
Grow tame by your kindness, and come at command;  
Exert with your husband the same happy skill,  
For hearts, like young birds, may be tam'd to your will.

Be gay and good-humour'd, complying and kind,  
Turn the chief of your care from your face to your mind;  
'Tis there that a wife may her conquests improve,  
And Hymen shall rivet the fetters of love.

<sup>9</sup> Garrick's happiness sprang in large part from a steady seriousness of affection

head the poet laureat's Variety, a tale for married people, in which "We live, my dear, too much together," and "We live, my dear, too much asunder," are happily illustrated, and the art of making the conjugal life retain its flavour and zest is prettily pointed out.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the most essential requisite in the character of an agreeable wife is good temper. Horace, when speaking pathetically of leaving one's wife at the solemn separation of death,

quite in contrast to the mercurial manners of such contemporaries as Sheridan or Boswell himself. He was in a state of unhappiness following his long, patient, and fruitless endurance of Peg Woffington's whims when he met the little foreign dancer who was to devote herself to him and his memory until she died at the age of 98. This was Eva Maria Veigel, called Mlle Violette, supposed daughter of one John Veigel of Vienna, although she herself cherished the idea that she came of noble blood. She was taken into the imperial household and educated for a time with the Austrian heirs, and went to England, it is said, only because the interest of the Emperor became something more than paternal. She was protected in England by the Earl of Burlington's family, and while dancing at the opera was received in noble and fashionable society; her first appearance was in 1746.

It is said that she saw Garrick in some of his acting parts, and fell in love with him to the point of pining. Lady Burlington had exalted plans for her, but the sympathy of a clever physician, who represented the Violet's case as one of life or death, finally won consent—but not before Garrick had had to disguise himself in women's clothes and go through other romantic performances in order to get letters to her. On their marriage he settled £10,000 a year on her, beside ample pin-money. She was frequently assistant judge of manuscript offered to Garrick, and they wrote letters together to his nieces and their friends; the singular contentment in their devotion is exemplified in one of Garrick's answers to an invitation (*Garrick Corresp.*, 2. 150)—"As I have not left Mrs. Garrick one day since we were married, near twenty-eight years, I cannot now leave her." (See Fitzgerald, *David Garrick*; Garrick's will, an appendix to Davies's *Life of Garrick*; *Life of J.*, 4. 111 ff.)

<sup>10</sup> Published in 1776. The sincerely loving pair, who see little company in the country, become bored with one another:

Enough, he cries! the reason's plain.  
For causes never rack your brain.  
Our neighbours are like other folks,  
Skip's playful tricks, and Jenny's jokes  
Are still delightful, still would please  
Were we, my dear, ourselves at ease. ....  
The scene's the same, the same the weather—  
WE LIVE, MY DEAR, TOO MUCH TOGETHER.

They go to London, where

.... so divinely Life ran on,  
So separate, so quite *bon ton*,

characterises her as “*placens uxor*, pleasing wife;” which I would understand to be what Pope means by

Blest with a temper whose unclouded ray  
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day.<sup>11</sup>

But I am not bashaw enough to hold that all complacency must be on the woman’s side. Nay, I am willing to allow, that Marriage is an equal contract between man and woman; and that although, in a political view, infidelity is much more criminal in the wife than in the husband, yet in every other respect the offence is as great in one as in the other; and no man has a right to complain that his wife does not love him, and is not studious of his happiness, if he disgusts and shocks her by an intimate association

That meeting in a public place  
They scarcely knew each other’s face. ....  
Behold us now, dissolving quite  
In the full ocean of delight;  
In pleasures ev’ry hour employ,  
Immers’d in all the world calls joy ....  
Nor happy yet!—and where’s the wonder?—  
WE LIVE, MY DEAR, TOO MUCH ASUNDER.

The moral of my Tale is this,  
Variety’s the soul of bliss.  
But such Variety alone  
As makes our home the more our own.  
As from the heart’s impelling pow’r  
The life-blood pours it’s genial store;  
Tho’, taking each a various way,  
The active streams meandering play  
Thro’ ev’ry artery, ev’ry vein,  
All to the heart return again: ....  
So real Happiness below  
Must from the Heart sincerely flow;  
Nor, list’ning to the Syren’s song,  
Must stray too far, or rest too long.

Boswell expresses a naïve agreement with this doctrine in his *Letters*, I. 240:

Intervals of absence make conjugal society more agreeable; especially when the time of absence has not been very happily spent.

For Boswell’s pleasure in Whitehead’s verse, see *Hyp.* 11, 59. The poet had become laureate in 1757; he was succeeded by Thomas Warton in 1785.

<sup>11</sup> Horace, *Carm.*, 2. 14. 22. Boswell quotes from memory Pope’s *Mor. Ess.*, 2. 257, “O bless’d with temper ....” This latter quotation is reproduced at some length in Murphy’s *The Way to Keep Him*, to which Boswell has just referred.

with abandoned women.<sup>12</sup> The injustice of that kind of profligacy is, I am afraid, not sufficiently perceived; so that men of good characters upon the whole, nay, men who esteem and even love their wives above all other women, are apt, from exuberance of

<sup>12</sup> This paragraph presents an opinion which Boswell frequently held before Johnson, and which Johnson always answered from the "political view" (*Life of J.*, 2. 63, 523; 3. 398; *Hebr.*, 237). It is interesting chiefly, however, as a hint of explanation for a vague statement of 1779 in the *Life of J.*, 3. 462 (the italics are mine):

*I mentioned to him, a dispute between a friend and his lady, concerning conjugal infidelity, which my friend had maintained was by no means so bad in the husband, as in the wife.* JOHNSON. "Your friend was in the right, Sir. Between a man and his Maker it is a different question: between a man and his wife, a husband's infidelity is nothing. They are connected by children, by fortune, by serious considerations of community. Wise married women don't trouble themselves about the infidelity of their husbands." BOSWELL. "To be sure there is a great difference between the offence of infidelity in a man and that of his wife." JOHNSON. "The difference is boundless. The man imposes no bastards upon his wife."

Here it may be questioned whether Johnson was entirely in the right. I suppose it will not be controverted that the difference in the degree of criminality is very great, on account of the consequences: but still it may be maintained, that, independent of moral obligation, infidelity is by no means a light offence in a husband; because it must hurt a delicate attachment, in which a mutual constancy is implied, with such refined sentiments as Massinger has exhibited in his play of *The Picture*.—Johnson probably at another time would have admitted this opinion. And let it be kept in remembrance, that he was very careful not to give any encouragement to irregular conduct. *A gentleman, not adverting to the distinction made by him upon this subject, supposed a case of singular perverseness in a wife, and heedlessly said, "That he thought a husband might do as he pleased with a safe conscience."* JOHNSON. "Nay, Sir, this is wild indeed; you must consider that fornication is a crime in a single man; and you cannot have more liberty by being married."

Both a *friend* and a *gentleman* are without doubt Boswell himself (see for such reference to himself on many occasions, note 14 below). It is probable that Mrs. Boswell had objected to some of Boswell's "transient amorous connections," and that he had answered her by arguments from the "political view." Her retort had been the "singular perverseness" in which she appeared not to "love him, and [not to be] studious of his happiness," and which Boswell had capped by the "heedless" remark that in such case he felt himself licensed to do as he pleased in search of comfort. It is this passage at arms, I think, which Boswell at first presented in full in the *Life of Johnson*, and afterward canceled at the advice of friends (see his letter to Malone, *Letters of B.*, 2. 422—the italics in this case, as usual, Boswell's):

I must have a cancelled leaf in Vol. II of that passage where there is a conversation as to the conjugal infidelity on the husband's side, and his wife saying she did not care how many women he went to, if he *loved* her alone; with my proposing to mark in a pocket book every time a wife *refuses*, &c. &c. I wonder how you and I admitted this to the publick eye, for Windham &c. were struck with its *indelicacy*, and it might hurt the book much. It is, however, mighty good stuff.

Perhaps part of its goodness was due to characteristic illustrations on the part of Johnson; the remark about the responsibilities of birds, quoted in the earlier

appetite and capricious fondness of variety, to indulge themselves in it.<sup>18</sup>

A gentleman of this description happened not long ago to step into a tobacconist's shop, and the waste-paper going to be used was a part of Peter Bembo's Epistles, containing an excellent letter upon this very subject. He saved it, and was almost inclined to

part of this essay, bears close relationship to the topic, and may have come from Boswell's notes of the canceled conversation.

A comparable passage, which, I think, preserves one of Margaret Boswell's angry sarcasms on Boswell's "transient amorous connections," occurs in the *Life of J.*, 3. 29:

I repeated to him an argument of a lady of my acquaintance, who maintained, that her husband's having been guilty of numberless infidelities, released her from conjugal obligations, because they were reciprocal. . . . She only argues that she may indulge herself in gallantries with equal freedom as her husband does, provided she takes care not to introduce a spurious issue into his family.

It is worthy of note that, although Boswell used Johnson's arguments to his wife in order to preserve his status as head of the house, he was convinced by hers, and offers them in both the anonymous essays and the *Life of Johnson*.

<sup>18</sup> Further self-criticism. See *Letters of B.* for comparable recognition of the fact that Mrs. Boswell had cause for objection:

No man ever had a higher esteem or a warmer love of a wife than I of her. . . . Yet how painful is it to me to recollect a thousand instances of *inconsistent* conduct. I can justify my removing to the great sphere of England, upon a principle of laudable ambition. But the frequent scenes of what I must call *dissolute* conduct are inexcuseable [sic].—(*Letters*, 2. 369.)

I am in charming health and spirits. There is a handsom maid in this inn who interrupts me by coming sometimes into the room. . . . I am *too many* as the phrase is, for one woman; and a certain transient connection I am persuaded does not interfere with that attachment which a man has for a *wife* and which I have as much as any man that ever lived, though *some* of my qualifications are not valued by her, as they have been by other women—ay, and well educated women too. Concubinage is almost universal. If it was morally wrong why was it permitted to the most pious men under the old testament? Why did our Saviour never say a word against it?

Dr. Young says,

A fever argues better than a Clarke.

It is as fair reasoning for me to say that this handsom maid (Matty is her name) argues better than—whom you please. But remember, I am only speculating. (*Ibid.*, 1. 215.)

I told you that my arguments for concubinage were only for theory. The patriarchs might have a plurality of women because they were not taught that it was wrong. But I, who have allways been taught that it *is* wrong, cannot [have] any *women* without an impression of [being so]. . . . But is not this *prejudice*? Be it so. (*Ibid.*, 1. 216.)

There is a Miss Silverton in the fly with me, an amiable creature, who has been in France. I can unite little fondnesses with perfect conjugal love. (*Ibid.*, 1. 226.)

See also, for his acquaintance with Mrs. Rudd, *ibid.*, 1. 251, and *Life of J.*, 3. 91; for his sentimental friendship with Mrs. Stuart, *Letters of B.*, 1. 225–26, 252. Contrast to these his exclamation about his uncle, Dr. Boswell—"Do you know, he was not confined to one woman?" (*ibid.*, 2. 309).

call the incident providential. I know the story to be true;<sup>14</sup> and I shall present my readers with such a translation as I find myself able to give.<sup>15</sup>

*To the Very Reverend Dominick Contarenus, Patriarch of Venice, all health and happiness.*

I wish, and indeed earnestly desire, that, as notwithstanding the great and ancient intimacy and companionship between you and my father Bernard Bembo, and my profound respect for you during many years, I have never yet ventured to write to you, I had a more agreeable cause for beginning a correspondence, than that which now impels me to address you. But if it hath so happened, that it is necessary in an earnest manner to implore your assistance in an affair of which it was always very painful to me to speak, but in which I am sure of your love and benevolence towards us, I shall conduct myself with more steadiness, because the business is of such a nature that there cannot be a better reason for my supplicating you, nor for your pardoning me. For I am to beg of you that Antonia Marcella, my sister, a most virtuous woman, may, by your interposition, be restored to the possession of her husband's heart, which has been basely alienated from her by the love of harlots. Such is his state that as yet neither the authority of worthy and most respectable men, who have not failed to admonish him, nor the just expostulations of myself and the rest of our family, particularly my Father Bembo's; nay, daily prayers, grief, tears, conjuring, and shame, have been of no avail; you alone remain to whom we can have recourse. For you preside over us in holy things. The ordinances of Marriage therefore are chiefly to be preserved for you; for they have always been held most sacred. Which laws, since Marcellus, my sister's husband, the most daring of all men, not only rashly neglects, but plainly breaks down and tramples upon, as for

<sup>14</sup> An ingenuous instance of giving himself away. It is characteristic of Boswell to allude to himself as "a gentleman" or by some other vague term, in situations of which he has no cause to be proud; see *Life of J.*, 2. 222, 260, 499; 3. 57, 304, 462; 4. 316. It is also characteristic of him to see the awful hand of Providence in coincidence; see *Life of J.*, 4. 314, and *Hebr.*, 118, 295. He is indeed, in this instance so affected that he forgets his disguise, and allows the reader to guess that he is the "gentleman of this description" by presenting a full translation of the letter which the gentleman had saved.

Possibly this entire essay was written as a handsome acknowledgment of frailty after some entertainment which Boswell regretted; it was published in the London Magazine for April 1781, and Boswell was in London (where he usually led an extremely dissipated existence) from March 19 to June 2 of that year.

<sup>15</sup> Quotation marks, preceding each line of print in the original, here omitted.

your own sake, you should not suffer such an indignity, so matters are come to that pass, that unless some aid proceeds from you, there is no longer any hope. You will certainly take care that my sister, my father, my mother, in short, our whole family, which has in vain sought relief from his impure audacity, as if ship-wrecked on an infamous rock; you will surely take care that as you only are our sacred anchor in this tempest, we shall at length smile in security and freedom. For now, though he seems regardless of God and mankind, he still stands in awe of you and your judgement, supposing every thing else to have ceased with him. But if he hath even got the better of you, it is all over; and he must destroy both himself and us. I will not enumerate to you what, and how many indignities my sister Antonia hath suffered these two years, while this prudent and excellent woman by mildness, modesty, chastity, patience, the greatest fatigue, and what in such cases is most difficult of all, by silence hath endeavoured to sooth and turn to a better course her wicked and abandoned husband. I am ashamed to put in writing the calumny, the abuse, the unheard of arrogance of Marcellus towards us. We would rather forget than revenge, hoping that either loss of fortune, or respect, of both of which he has already incurred a great diminution, or the admonition of time, he being now in a cooler period of life, or, as often happens, a satiety of the vice itself, may make him at last reflect and awake, and that on account of our easiness and indulgence, he may love us more than ever. I hear that Bembo, my father, has laid the case before you, and that you, moved by its atrociousness, have resolved according to your strict sanctity to proceed against the offender. If he has told you all, there is no need of my saying any thing. But if he has chosen to conceal part, he has done so from shame, being unwilling to have it known that he has given his only daughter in Marriage to so corrupt a man. Wherefore let me not be thought to attack my father's opinion, if I lay open the ulcers which that disease has impressed and burnt upon our minds. Unquestionably, though we were silent, he is sufficiently condemned by the actions which he does not deny, and which all the Marcelli, and all his own relations hear in the discourse of others. Neither do I now write to you, because I think that a cause so pious, so just, so open, so evident of itself, needs my help with you especially, whose integrity, sanctity, and prudence are such, that you do not need any monitor to begin what is right, or any encourager to perfect it. But since heaven has left me, I think, nothing dearer, nothing more pleasing than my sister Antonia, I cannot refrain, were it even less necessary, from begging and entreating, that you may be the avenger of her wrongs, and that you may raise up an excellent woman fallen down and deluded by unworthy means. In which business you are chiefly to take care, that you believe nothing which Marcellus may say, were it even at

the holy altar. For as he is of all men the readiest to flatter and promise, so is he also the most perfidious. Nobody seems meeker, nobody sweeter, nay, nobody more sanctified, while he is begging from you what he wishes to have. But having obtained his wish he knows neither you, nor his faith, nor any thing sacred or civil. It is necessary to press, to urge him, to come to a conclusion with him, and neither to give nor forgive him any thing till you have completed your purpose. If you do not treat him thus, I tell you before-hand he will escape from you, and will elude you and your judgement. He will then return more prone to sin, and will in a more intolerable manner triumph over us as over vanquished foes. But as this is not to be borne I swear his crimes shall be punished another way. I return to what I said before: Marcellus will undoubtedly destroy himself and us unless you conduct this affair in a way becoming your dignity. Wherefore it is his interest as much as our's that he should obtain nothing of you, but by all means be compelled and forced to break off from his pestilent course. As for yourself, as in truth nothing can happen to us of greater consequence, more grateful, or more to be wished, than your using your endeavours to have this matter settled as we desire, and as it is just it should be, you will easily judge how much we shall all be indebted to you. And as to Marcellus, I do hope, that when he shall feel himself freed by you from his habits of wenching, which are so full of infamy, so full of ruin, and shall enjoy a sedate and peaceful mind, he will give you the greatest thanks, that from living like the wild beasts, without modesty, without law, without any duty, you have conducted him to the rational life of man. Farewell!

*Urbino, nones of July, 1510.*

No. XLIV. May 1781.

## [ON PRUDENCE]

Νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔνι οὐδεμίαν ἀρετὴν ἀνευ τῆς φρονήσεως συστῆναι.

—NICOMACH.<sup>1</sup>

Now there cannot exist any one virtue without Prudence.

**A**CURIOS foreigner, who has obtained very comfortable encouragement in England, has published a book, in which he endeavours to shew, that most of the discoveries in philosophy, science, and the arts, which are attributed to the moderns, are indeed borrowed from the ancients.

Without meaning to affect, being altogether convinced by that writer, I confess I am more and more of opinion that the wisest maxims are very old ones; for, that mankind have, in ages very early with respect to ours, observed by their natural sagacity, what is solidly true, and of consequence permanent.<sup>1a</sup>

Accordingly in the ethicks preserved to us by *Nicomachus*, and illustrated by the paraphrase of *Andronicus Rhodius*, we find the human virtues, independent of revealed excellence, as well explained and recommended to our practice, as in any treatise whatever.

Of these, I have been peculiarly pleased with Prudence; and shall therefore make it the subject of this paper. It is said, “*Nulum numen abest si sit Prudentia*—There is nothing propitious wanting if there be Prudence.” May I not hope then to be inspired with genius while I write of that quality? But to consider the proverb in its usual acceptation. A friend of mine of most distinguished abilities, remarked that it affirms too much; for undoubtedly there may be Prudence, where there is an absence of many

<sup>1</sup> Boswell is paraphrasing Aristotle's *Ethics*, 6. 13 (Bywater edition, 1144<sup>b</sup>16): τὸ μὲν ἀρετὴ φυσικὴ τὸ δ' ἡ κυρία, καὶ τούτων ἡ κυρία οὐ γίνεται ἀνευ φρονήσεως.

The magazine text gave Νῦν for Νῦν, δε for δ', ἀρετὴν for ἀρετὴν, and Boswell made no correction.

<sup>1a</sup> Boswell allowed the punctuation of this passage to stand as it is here, leaving the last part apparently an incomplete clause. I assume, however, that the comma between *for* and *that* is a printer's error; Boswell probably intended *for that* to be a conjunctive expression equivalent to *because* or *since*. For other instances of carelessness in the indication of sentence structure, see *Hyp.* 59 n. 7.

bright and valuable qualities. But, said he, the proposition varied is true, that “*Nullum numen adest si non sit Prudentia*<sup>2</sup>—There is nothing propitious if there be not Prudence,” which is just the thought in *Nicomachus* that I have chosen for my motto, “Now there cannot exist any one virtue without Prudence.”

*Swift* has treated Prudence with contempt, as a dull sneaking quality;<sup>3</sup> and in this he has been followed by numbers who have been glad under the cover of such authority to hide their vices and follies; and to assume a certain vain glory, as if they could have acted much better, had it been worth their while, and had they not been of a more gay and generous cast of mind than others.

*Swift* and his followers have not understood Prudence; but have mistaken for it the bastard imposture selfish cunning, which is undoubtedly both mean and hateful. Whereas Prudence, in the genuine and large sense of the word, is a capital virtue, being no less than the habitual power of managing to the best advantage all our talents, and adapting our conduct to circumstances in the most effectual manner.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The maxim comes from Juvenal, *Sat.*, 10. 365. It is used also as motto for *The Spectator*, 225. Boswell evidently liked this particular satire well; see quotation from it in *Hyp.* 3, 26, and *Letters of B.*, 1. 183. It is the one which Johnson imitates in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*.

The “friend of distinguished abilities” is Johnson, whose remark Boswell here quotes from memory—cf. the more authentic *Life of J.*, 4. 207:

I heard him once say, “Though the proverb *Nullum numen adest, si sit prudentia*, does not always prove true, we may be certain of the converse of it, *Nullum numen adest, si sit imprudentia*.”

<sup>3</sup> Boswell exaggerates the conclusion of the fourteenth chapter in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry* (in *Martinus Scriblerus* papers by Swift, Pope, and others):

The first and chief rule [for turning a vicious man into a hero] is the golden rule of transformation, which consists in converting vices into their bordering virtues . . . ; cowardice may be metamorphosed into prudence; intemperance into . . . good fellowship. . . .

<sup>4</sup> The fact that this entire essay is criticism of Boswell himself is proved by the autobiographical quality of the definition here given. To Boswell, prudence meant a resignation of his own tastes, a devotion to the law which he hated, residence at his Scottish estate, and a general effort to imitate the *animus aequus* of Lord Auchinleck—all methods of “adapting his conduct to the circumstances” of his father’s opinions and the Boswell family’s position in society (*Letters of B.*, 1. 12, 15, 33, 55, 177, 235; 2. 307, 351; *Boswelliana*, 239: 241, 242; *Life of J.*, 2. 113; 3. 273; *Hebr.*, 58, 427 ff., 434. Cf. *Hyp.* 45, 46, and notes). He was so convinced that prudence was resignation and repression that he pre-

In the 13th chapter of the 6th book of the *Ethicks*, from which I have taken my motto, the distinction between Σοφία Wisdom and Φρόνησις Prudence is well pointed out. The first is a speculative theory of what is proper and good; the other is the cause of action. Now, says our authour, men are not readier to do what is just and honourable, by knowing what should be done, no more than their bodies are made sound and healthy by their having a skill in what will produce such salutary effects. All depends upon use, upon habit, just as a man never can excell in gymnaſtſick exercises by knowing ever so perfectly how they are performed, but must acquire facility by practice. The late worthy Mr. Harris of Salisbury, whose mind was impregnated with the mildest Greek philosophy, says in one of his treatises, that “man is nothing but by habit.”<sup>5</sup> But it is Prudence which enables us to form right habits in every way.

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sumed to advise others even as he tried to discipline himself; see the comic sententiousness of his letters to the sprightly De Guiffardière and Mlle de Zuylen, and even to his dear Temple (*Letters of B.*, 1. 43, 48 ff., 167, 244; 2. 288, 461).

It is no wonder that he found himself lacking in this regard; the tragedy of Boswell’s life was the constant struggle between his mercurial nature and the guilty sense that he ought to be a placid Lord of Session with fixed residence at Auchinleck. To the end of his life, in spite of steadily increasing dissipation (produced in part by this nervous uncertainty of purpose), he was promising various correspondents that he would without delay become a “sober, regular man” and follower of the law (see *Hyp.* 64 n. 9; *Letters of B.*, 2. 427, 429, 432, 435, 447, 461).

<sup>5</sup> James Harris (1709–1780), who was nicknamed “Hermes Harris” from his *Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Universal Grammar* (1751). He had been brought up as a lawyer, but on inheriting his father’s estates, he occupied himself with study of the classics, and continued his scholarly pursuits in spite of public service in Parliament, the Admiralty, the Treasury, and the household of Queen Charlotte.

He was also the author of essays on the arts and a dialogue on happiness, published together as *Art and Happiness* (1744). It is probably this work which Boswell quotes; in a letter to his friend Temple, who had a fondness for the book, Boswell criticizes the style of the dialogue as “aukward and ludicrous” (*Letters of B.*, 1. 21, 219), although he admits that he “rose from reading the Dialogue happier and more disposed to follow virtue.” Johnson considered Harris “a prig, and a bad prig,” much to Boswell’s bewilderment (*Life of J.*, 3. 277–78); on one occasion (*ibid.*, 2. 258),

I spoke of Mr. Harris of Salisbury as being a very learned man, and in particular an eminent

Prudence, therefore, as I understand it, may be defined "the habit of acting wisely to the best of our abilities." And if it shall be so understood, the high praise which the ancients have given to it will not appear to be extravagant exaggeration; since it is certain that a person of very moderate talents who has Prudence, will excell one of infinitely greater talents who has not that quality.

I am not going wildly to maintain in the style of a modern enthusiast for eloquence or the spoken language, though a man of knowledge and talents, that Prudence will do every thing for us;<sup>6</sup> that it will make us dance like Vestris, senior or junior, harangue like Burke, or play on the hautboy like Fischer.<sup>7</sup> I only mean to

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Grecian. JOHNSON. "I am not sure of that. His friends give him out as such, but I know not who of his friends are able to judge of it."

See also Boswell's characterization of Harris, and anecdote of his amiable wit, in *Hebr.*, 430.

<sup>6</sup> It was Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788), father of the dramatist, who exaggerated the excellences of elocution; Dr. Johnson is reported to have said (Gent. Mag. for 1785, p. 288): "If we should have a bad harvest this year, Mr. Sheridan would say:—'It was owing to the neglect of oratory.'" (See also *Life of J.*, 4. 238-39, 257; *Boswelliana*, 213-14.) Sheridan began life in Ireland as an actor, and continued to be connected with the theatre until his death, but his chief passion was a reform of British education. He maintained that the established system was too uniform, and advocated special training for the various professions; oratory he emphasized especially as a necessity in the preparation of men for public position, but he also insisted that more time should be spent in the schools upon the study of the English language. He gave lessons in pronunciation to burring Scots (Boswell was one, and Wedderburn, through whom Sheridan obtained a pension for Johnson, was another), gave lectures on oratory and kindred subjects in various towns of England, Ireland, and Scotland, and in his later life kept up a series of *Attic entertainments* consisting of readings and interpretation (Sanders, *Life of Sheridan*). Boswell was a familiar figure in the Sheridan household in London (Sichel, *Sheridan*), and it was through Thomas Sheridan, whom Boswell met in Edinburgh during the lecture tour of 1761, that Boswell first heard intimate details of Dr. Johnson's life and manners (*Life of J.*, 1. 446). Sheridan was the author of a pronouncing dictionary (1780), the plan of which had gained for him the pension which estranged him from Johnson, and several works on education and literary topics, the most pertinent to the present instance being his *Plan of Education for the Young Nobility and Gentry* (1769).

<sup>7</sup> Gaetano Appolino Baldassare Vestris, "le Dieu de Danse" (1729-1808) and his son Auguste were dancing in London at the time when this essay was

say, that by prudence, whatever we possess by nature or by art, will be turned to the best account.

The old philosopher, as I have observed above, makes Prudence consist in action; and he is most certainly right. For one may know quite well what one should do, and yet act a part very inconsistent with that knowledge. The famous epigram by way of epitaph, which it is said Rochester composed on Charles II. in his own presence, should ever be remembered:

"Here lies our sovereign Lord the King,  
"Whose word no man relies on,  
"Who never said a foolish thing,  
"And never did a wise one."

Full of the justice of the sentiment contained in these lines, which I have myself often had an opportunity to observe in my views of life; it has for some time been a custom with me, when I hear one praised as a sensible man, to ask this simple question, "Pray is he a sensible speaking man, or a sensible acting man?" "Both is best," to adopt the vulgar witticism. But surely for the substantial advantage of a man and of his family, the latter is preferable.<sup>8</sup>

The consideration of Prudence as an habitual energy, will at once solve the difficulty which makes ordinary men wonder so much, how people who know perfectly well what is wise and virtuous, do yet act foolishly and viciously. But let such take warning. For, as good habits depend much upon ourselves it is

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written, on leave from the French court, of which they, with Mme Vestris, were considered brilliant ornaments. Articles on the father and son, with portraits, appeared in the London Magazine for April and May, 1781 (the latter being the number in which the present essay was published); both accounts were accompanied by bitterly sarcastic comments to the effect that British money flowed into the pockets of these foreigners, while English artists were neglected.

Johann Christian Fischer (1733-1800), oboist and composer, was prominent in musical affairs at the English court from the year 1774; he was appointed chamber musician to the Queen in 1780. He established his reputation in various public concerts, but chiefly by his performance at the Händel commemoration services at Westminster Abbey, which George III so appreciated as to append a note in his own hand to the proof sheets of Dr. Burney's account of the occasion.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 23 and notes, entirely concerned with criticism of the man who talks too much, and obviously directed at Boswell's own defects.

culpable not to acquire them; and there is an aweful denunciation against him who knows his master's will and does it not.<sup>9</sup>

The truth of my motto will appear stronger the more it is illustrated by applying it to the various virtues, and occupations of human nature. Without Prudence, courage is animal rashness; candour, ridiculous simplicity; liberality, indiscriminate profusion.<sup>10</sup> Let us consider religion itself without Prudence; and we shall find that instead of doing all things decently and in order, and letting our light shine steadily before men, we shall cast our pearls before swine, and there shall be such excess and such ill-timed displays of what may be sincerely well meant, that there shall not be reverence but scorn; and however we ourselves may perhaps be benefited, our holy faith shall suffer in the estimation of the world, our injudicious conduct having the effect at once to lessen both us and our religion in the eyes of mankind.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Luke*, 12. 46-47: "The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and . . . will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Boswell's paragraph is a distinct criticism of the famous Johnsonian distinction between principle and practice; see also *Hyp.* 54 n. 7.

The biblical references in the following paragraph are *1 Cor.*, 14. 40; *Mtth.*, 5. 16; 7. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Boswell has perhaps been reading *The Spectator* for inspiration, or perhaps has an unconscious recollection of such numbers as 222 and 225. He uses without definite reference the same lines from Juvenal as those at the head of *The Spectator* 225, and his method of emphasizing the need of prudence by a balance of virtues and weaknesses is employed, though more lightly, in the fourth paragraph of that essay. The wonder of ordinary men at the mismanagement of the talented or learned, mentioned *supra* by Boswell, is the subject of *The Spectator*, 222.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 54. Typical eighteenth-century horror of *enthusiasm*, which was still very largely a term of reproach. Dr. Johnson defined it as "a vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favour or communication." South, whose sermons Boswell read (cf. *Hyp.* 26 n. 13), and who may have influenced the pronouncement made in this essay, calls enthusiasm "that pestilent and vile thing which, wheresoever it has had its full course, has thrown both Church and State into confusion" (*Sermons*, 4. 41). See Stephen, *History of English Thought in the 18th Century*, 2. 370; and Babbitt, *Masters of Modern French Criticism*, 7:

The process by which the word *enthusiasm* itself changed, in the course of the eighteenth century, from a bad to a good meaning, by which the *enthusiast* and the original genius

We cannot even be properly merry without Prudence. It is justly said, "*Risu inepto res ineptior nulla est*—There is nothing more foolish than a foolish laugh,"<sup>12</sup> which implies that there may be good sense in laughter as well as in any thing else. "To be merry and wise," is a proverbial expression; and though one cannot lay down a formal system of laughter, every person of any discernment fully understands what I mean by distinguishing folly from sagacity in that expression which is said by some philosophers to be the peculiar characteristick of man, whom they describe as "a risible animal."<sup>13</sup>

There is therefore no part of education more essential than teaching the great art of Prudence, accustoming young people constantly to reflect, to know their own dispositions and talents, to attain to the government and direction of their faculties at all times, so as to make the most of them with reference both to themselves and others; in short to be as uniformly as possible wise and agreeable members of society, which without Prudence it is impossible they can ever be.<sup>14</sup>

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supplanted the wit and the man of the world, is one of the most important in literary history, and can scarcely be traced too carefully.

Boswell is broad enough to allow sympathy with it in *Hyp.* 55, and frequently alludes to himself as an enthusiast on other scores. See *Life of J.*, 3. 8, 139, 202, 305; *Hebr.*, 254, 432.

<sup>12</sup> Catullus, *Carm.*, 39. 16. Quoted also by *The Spectator*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> See *Hyp.* 42, 62 n. 12, for a repetition of this distinction.

<sup>14</sup> To appreciate the personal application of this conclusion, cf. Boswell's description of himself in *Hebr.*, 58—"He had rather too little, than too much prudence," and his early good intentions, expressed in a letter of 1763 to Temple (*Letters of B.*, 1. 21):

[My father] is anxious for fear I should fall off from my prudent system, and return to my dissipated unsettled way of thinking; and in order to make him easy, he insists on having my solemn promise that I will persist in the scheme on which he is so earnestly bent. . . . I think I may promise this much: that I shall from this time study propriety of conduct, and to be a man of knowledge and prudence as far as I can. . . . Let me endeavour to acquire steadiness and constant propriety of conduct, without which we never can enjoy what I fondly hope for.

No. XLV. June 1781.

## [ON PARENTS &amp; CHILDREN]

*Mortales sumus imo nec diuturni sumus: Una ratione diu supersumus si prosemi namus qui supersint. Vivimus in posteris.*—**JUSTUS LIPSIUS**<sup>1</sup>

“We are mortal. Nay we are not long lived. There is one way by which we may last a considerable time, which is, propagating children to survive us. We live in our *posterity*.”

**I**NSTINCT in other animals, and instinct in the human species differ very much in many instances, and in none more than with respect to the continuation of the species. Instinct in other animals only prompts to the *means* of having offspring, and to take care of their young. In the human species it prompts to the *end*, man being formed not only *cœlum tueri* to look erect as Ovid finely distinguishes him from the beasts who look prone,<sup>2</sup> as Sallust also observes—but to look forward into futurity; and hence he has a strong desire for descendants. In savage life he thinks of preserving his memorable brave deeds, his affections, his resentments from age to age by means of his sons, and his sons sons in succession; so that “I am the last of my race,” is a grievous lamentation in that state of society. In civilized life he thinks of preserving his name, his titles, his possessions; and the pleasure which he has in that imagination is perhaps as strong and as permanent as any one enjoyment of which he is capable.

It is indeed wonderful how very strong the desire of continuing ourselves, as we fancy, by a series of offspring, is in all the human race, when we consider that a child begins to exist and comes into the world, we know not how, and most certainly without our being conscious of any ingenuity or art. There is a good story of a simple gentleman who on being asked how he had contrived to have so many pretty daughters, declared “upon his honour, it was

<sup>1</sup> *Epistolarum Selectarum Centuria II ad Belgas*, letter 22, addressed to Guilielmus Assonuillius. Justus Lipsius is the Latinized name of Joest Lips (1547–1606), a Belgian scholar who taught at the universities of Leyden and Louvain. He was chiefly celebrated for his knowledge of Tacitus, whose works he edited in 1575.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid, *Metam.*, I. 85; Sallust, *Bell. Catil.*, I—“*animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur; alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum beluis commune est.*”

all by chance." I am afraid that in general parents may make a more extensive declaration; and allow that the formation of the tempers and principles of their children has been all by chance.

But though education does properly speaking make the character, we find that parents claim, and are allowed, a greater connection with their children than masters; nay, they are vainer of their childrens attainments. There is something in the notion of *property*, of whatever kind, of what we consider is *our's*, that is the cause of this. A man is vain of improvements upon his estate in which he and all the world know he had no share but paying for them; and that children should be looked upon in some sense as the property of their parents is no peculiar fancy, but has been received in many nations. Even amongst ourselves it is so consonant with the feelings of parents, that it is not easy for them to give up their delusive pretensions.<sup>3</sup>

The *patria potestas* of the ancient Romans appears to have been a very rigorous institution, and not very compatible with the bold freedom for which that people is so highly celebrated. For, if young men be accustomed to the most abject dependence on unlimited authority in an individual, it would seem their spirits must be broke, so as that they never can attain to that manly resolution without which we never enjoy liberty.<sup>4</sup> In our own country we see fathers who very injudiciously, and in my opinion very unjustly, attempt to keep their sons even when well advanced in life, in such a state of subjection as must either reduce them to unfeeling stupidity, or keep them in perpetual uneasiness and vexation. At what period parental power of compulsion should cease, and be succeeded by voluntary filial reverence, cannot be exactly ascertained, but must be left to settle itself according to various circumstances attending the parties. One thing however is certainly right—that the change should be gradual, that a son may imperceptibly arrive at the dignity of personal independence,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the importance of a man to himself, *Hyp.* 66, and the letter from Boswell to Temple in 1789 (*Letters of B.*, 2. 368):

There is . . . a benignant principle in human nature which disposes men in general to have an irresistible predilection for themselves, and all that is connected with them as participating of themselves. Every man has a particular regard for his own person, be it what it may, &c. &c. I need not expand the thought.

<sup>4</sup> Contrast to this, *Hyp.* 19 and notes, on the progressive decay of authority, and *Hyp.* 64 n. 9 on the restless man's need of awe before authority.

so as not to be intoxicated and abuse it. If a father has not consideration enough to keep this in view, and accommodate himself accordingly, he will lose in a great measure the satisfaction and comfort of having a son. I knew a father who was a violent whig, and used to attack his son for being a tory, upbraiding him with being deficient in "noble sentiments of liberty," while at the same time he made this son live under his roof in such bondage, that he was not only afraid to stir from home without leave like a child, but durst scarcely open his mouth in his father's presence.<sup>5</sup> This

<sup>5</sup> In these autobiographic details, Boswell is extending something of sympathy to himself. He is clearly alluding to his relations with his father, who was a fiery Whig (*Hebr.*, 428, 437), and whose character was "such that he must have his son in a great degree of subjection to him" (*Letters of B.*, 1. 99)—who could not even "bear that his son should talk with him as a man" (*ibid.*, 2. 306). As a result, Boswell tells Temple in 1775 (*ibid.*, 1. 240),

I am often hurt, when, I dare say, he means no harm, and he has a method of treating me, which makes me *feel myself like a timid boy*, which to *Boswell* (comprehending all that my character does, in my own imagination and in that of a wonderful number of mankind) is intollerable.

Lord Auchinleck kept Boswell in subjection chiefly, however, by holding the purse-strings and maintaining a mysterious silence as to his intentions regarding settlements for his offspring (see *Hyp.* 46 and notes). He gave Boswell an allowance of £300 a year, which he decreased to £200 when he settled debts for his heir (*Letters of B.*, 1. 229, 239).

For the most part, Boswell seems to have kept a balance between respect and independence, although attendance upon his father meant "living in a mixed stupidity of attention to country objects and restraint from expressing any of [his] own feelings," and "cost [him] drinking a considerable quantity of strong beer to dull [his] faculties." (*Ibid.*, 1. 235, 241. Cf. also *Hyp.* 44 and notes.) He resolutely refused to suppress his own personality entirely; he wrote to Temple in 1767 (*ibid.*, 1. 127):

How unaccountable is it that my father and I should be so ill together! He is a man of sense and a man of worth. But from some unhappy turn in his disposition, he is much dissatisfied with a son whom you know.

I write to him with warmth, with an honest pride, wishing that he should think of me as I am;—but my letters shock him, and every expression in them is interpreted unfavourably. To give you an instance, I send you a letter I had from him a few days ago. How galling is it to the friend of Paoli to be treated so! I have answered him in my own stile. I will be myself. I have said, "Why think so strangely of my expression of being *primus Mantua*? Suppose I were married to Miss Blair, would I not be *primus Mantua* at Adamtown? And why not? Would you not be pleased to see your son happy in independence, cultivating his little farm, and ornamenting his nuptial villa, and fitting himself to fill one day, as well as possible, the place of a much greater man?"

Temple, would you not like such a son? Would you not feel a glow of parental joy? I know you would. And yet my worthy father writes to me in the manner you see, with that Scots strength of sarcasm which is peculiar to North Briton. But he is offended with that fire which you and I cherish as the essence of our souls, and how can I make him happy?

was sad living. Yet I would rather see such an excess of awe than a degree of familiarity between father and son by which all reverence is destroyed. I have seen only one instance of this. They were associates in profligacy. It shocked me so much that I abhor the recollection of it.

The natural inclination to take care of our offspring is, I believe, as strong as the principle of duty which is afterwards established by reason and reflection. It is remarkable that in the divine law it is not thought necessary to inculcate parental duty, whereas that of children is one of the ten commandments, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This is a proof that children might be safely trusted to the affection of their parents; but that on the other hand the return which children ought to make required to be specially enjoined. The Athenians found it necessary to make a law by which children should be punished for ingratitude to their parents.<sup>6</sup>

The persuasion that children are truly a part of their parents, should, one would think never fail to produce mutual affection. And indeed it must be acknowledged that at least while children

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Am I bound to do so, at the expence, not of this or the other agreeable wish, but at the expence of myself? The time was when such a letter from my father . . . . would have depressed. But I am now firm, and as my revered friend, Mr. Samuel Johnson, used to say, I feel the privileges of an independent human being. However, it is hard that I cannot have the pious satisfaction of being well with my father.

See also *ibid.*, 1. 55-56, 135, 159, 177, 215, 260; 2. 307; *Boswelliana*, 203, 323; *Hebr.*, 123 n. 1; *Life of J.*, 1. 493; 2. 24 n. 4, 214, 236; 3. 108, 207, 474.

<sup>6</sup> See Westermarck, *Origin . . . of the Moral Ideas*, 1. 536:

At ancient Athens, before a man could become a magistrate, evidence was to be produced that he had treated his parents properly; and a person who refused his parents food and dwelling lost his right of speaking in the national assembly.

Solon is credited with the establishment of this law by Diogenes Laërtius (*Life of Solon*, 7). Natural affection was much discussed in the Johnsonian circle; cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 444:

I mentioned that an eminent friend of ours, talking of the common remark, that affection descends, said, that "this was wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind; for which it was not so necessary that there should be affection from children to parents, as from parents to children; nay, there would be no harm in that view though children should at a certain age eat their parents." JOHNSON. "But, Sir, if this were known generally to be the case, parents would not have affection for children." BOSWELL. "True, Sir; for it is in expectation of a return that parents are so attentive to their children; and I know a very pretty instance of a little girl of whom her father was very fond, who once when he was in a melancholy fit, and had gone to bed, persuaded him to rise up in good humour by saying, 'My

are young, and the feelings of parents not deadened by being long habituated to the world, there is almost universally much love between them. *Justus Lipsius*, immediately after what I have taken for my motto, has these words: “*Et non quidem anima (absit hoc dicere) sed tamen in doles et igniculi in eos transeunt et amamus eos et amamur*—And not indeed the soul (far distant be such a thought) but our disposition and spirits are transferred into them; and we love them and are beloved by them.” It is

dear papa, please to get up, and let me help you on with your clothes, that I may learn to do it when you are an old man.”

See also *ibid.*, 2. 116, where Boswell still desires to rationalize family affection, and Johnson speaks for instinct:

BOSWELL. “Do you think, Sir, that what is called natural affection is born with us? It seems to me to be the effect of habit, or of gratitude for kindness. No child has it for a parent whom it has not seen.” JOHNSON. “Why, Sir, I think there is an instinctive natural affection in parents towards their children.”

Later (1783) both Boswell and Johnson were inclined to doubt the existence of natural affection; see the extended conversation in *ibid.*, 4. 243, ending in Boswell’s flat declaration,

“I believe natural affection, of which we hear so much, is very small.” JOHNSON. “Sir, natural affection is nothing: but affection from principle and established duty is sometimes wonderfully strong.” LOWE. “A hen, Sir, will feed her chickens in preference to herself.” JOHNSON. “But we don’t know that the hen is hungry; let the hen be fairly hungry, and I’ll warrant she’ll peck the corn herself. A cock, I believe, will feed hens instead of himself; but we don’t know that the cock is hungry.” BOSWELL. “And that, Sir, is not from affection but gallantry. But some of the Indians have affection.” JOHNSON. “Sir, that they help some of their children is plain; for some of them live, which they could not do without being helped.”

Contrast to these opinions, Boswell’s letter given below (n. 8). Interesting parallels to this passage are also found in Montaigne’s essay *Of Affection of Fathers to their Children*, addressed to Mme d’Estissac (Cotton’s translation):

If there be any Law truly Natural; that is to say, any Instinct that is seen universally and perpetually imprinted in both Beasts and Men (which is not without Controversie) I can then say, that in my opinion, next to the Care every Animal has of his own Preservation, . . . . the Affection that the Begetter bears to his Off-spring, holds the second place in this File. And seeing that Nature seems to have recommended it to us, having regard to the Extension and Propagation of the succive Piece of this Machine: ‘tis no wonder if on the contrary, that of Children towards their Parents is not so great. . . .

and in *The Spectator*, 189:

It is one of the greatest reflections on human nature, that paternal instinct should be a stronger motive to love than filial gratitude . . . . that the taking care of any person should endear the child or dependant more to the parent or benefactor, than the parent or benefactor to the child or dependant; yet so it happens, that for one cruel parent we meet with a thousand undutiful children. This is, indeed, wonderfully contrived for the support of every living species: but at the same time that it shows the wisdom of the Creator, it discovers the imperfection and degeneracy of the creature.

The obedience of children to their parents is the basis of all government, and set forth as the measure of that obedience which we owe to those whom Providence hath placed over us.

See also *The Spectator*, 120, 181.

curious to observe the extreme orthodox caution with which the worthy author guards against giving the least countenance to an opinion that soul may be transfused. The theory of generation is to be sure quite a mystery as vitality itself is. But however philosophers may differ, they all agree in the females having such a share, or such an influence in the formation of children, as should make a man very studious to choose a good mother to his children, and justify the trite satire that many of our nobility and gentry are more anxious for the pedigree of their horses than for that of their children. We are told by *Cornelius Nepos* that *Iphicrates* whose father was an Athenian, and his mother a Thracian, being asked whether he valued most his father or his mother? answered his mother; and when every one wondered at this, he said, "My father did what he could to make me a Thracian, but my mother did what she could to make me an Athenian."<sup>7</sup>

It cannot be denied that it is most agreeable and interesting to have children when in their earlier years. *Justus Lipsius*, talking to a friend on marriage, says, "Jam voluptas alia quanta et quam penetrans? videre natos liberos lusitantes, balbutientes, mox garrientes, fovere sinu, jungere ori, apprimere pectori: et habere in egressu in regressu tristibus etiam rebus lœtificantem hunc occursum—Then how great, how exquisite is another pleasure, to see your children smiling, lisping, and then prattling; to cherish them in your bosom, to kiss them, to press them to your breast, and when you go out and return to have, even amidst misfortunes, such cheering interviews." This is truly pleasing, and perhaps one is never fonder of ones children<sup>8</sup> than when they are about three years old, just in the state that *Lipsius* describes; nor does one suffer more keenly by their death than when they are so en-

<sup>7</sup> An incorrect reference to the story which occurs in the last part of the *Life of Iphicrates*; it is told of Menestheus, son of Iphicrates.

<sup>8</sup> Boswell appears to have been very fond of his own babies; the anecdote of the small daughter's blandishments (n. 6 *supra*) is probably told of Veronica Boswell, who at four months so delighted her father by appreciating the voice and gesture of Dr. Johnson (*Hebr.*, 27). See also *Hyp.* 46, the suggestion of a nation of children, and Boswell's letter written after the death of a son at birth (*Letters of B.*, I. 178):

I grant you that there is no *reason* for our having an affection for an infant which, as it is not properly a rational being, can have no qualities to engage us; yet Nature has given us such

gaging. One would then wish to take in a literal sense our Saviour's words as to little children, "of such is the kingdom of Heaven."<sup>9</sup> And how that may be we cannot tell. There is something of a peculiar pleasing fanciful consolation in the letter from a child of two years old in Heaven to its disconsolate surviving mother, in Mrs. Rowe's *Letters from the Dead to the Living*.<sup>10</sup>

I remember once observing to a friend that children are like nettles, very innocent when young, but sting you when they grow up. I trust, that this observation, though plausible, is not just; for, I believe it is often a father's own fault if his children do not give him increasing satisfaction as they advance in life. If he does the reverse of what he ought to do by indulging them when very young, and restraining them at the time he should relax, it is in the nature of things that they should be hurt by his treatment of them, and should be apt to dislike him. But if he has managed them with rational discipline while totally unfit to manage themselves, and allowed them a suitable freedom and confidence when

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an instinctive fondness, that being deprived of an infant gives us real distress. I have experienced this, and there is no arguing against it. It may be accounted for, even *reasonably* to a certain degree; because every parent annexes to his child a number of most agreeable hopes; and therefore, when he is bereft of his child, he is deprived of all those hopes. This to a man of warm imagination is no small loss. I was this forenoon [*sic*] paying a visit to John Dalrymple. He told me that Fergusson . . . used to maintain that till a child was four years old it was no better than a cabbage. However, Fergusson married and had a child which died soon after it was born; the firm philosopher was changed into the parent, and he was in very great grief, greater, said Dalrymple, than he would perhaps have been had his child died at the age of one and twenty, as his idea of what the child might be was higher than, in all probability, the reality would have been.

<sup>9</sup> *Mtth.*, 19. 14. See also *Luke*, 18. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe (1674-1737) was a religious author praised by Watts (with whom Johnson classed her) and honored by Prior and Pope, who printed certain of her works with theirs. The death of her young husband, thirteen years her junior, after a short married life, caused her to withdraw from society and devote herself to the composition of *Friendship in Death, in Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living* (1728), and *Letters Moral and Entertaining* (1729-1733). The first of these works, which Boswell quotes, was very popular, running into more than thirteen editions at home, and being translated twice into French. Dr. Johnson says of her style (*Life of J.*, I. 361):

The authours of the essays in prose [in Harrison's *Miscellanies*] seem generally to have imitated, or tried to imitate, the copiousness and luxuriance of Mrs. Rowe. This, however, is not all their praise; they have laboured to add to her brightness of imagery, her purity of sentiments. . . . The attempt to employ the ornaments of romance in the decoration of religion, was, I think, first made by Mr. Boyle's *Martyrdom of Theodora*; but Boyle's philosophical studies did not allow him time for the cultivation of style; and the completion of the great design was reserved for Mrs. Rowe.

older; has stored their minds with good instruction, and enabled them to acquire virtuous and pious habits, he will probably find them a joyful credit to him in life, and a support and comfort at death, so that he shall be sensible of the truth of that verse of the Psalmist, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Psalm*, 127. 3. After the death of his wife, Boswell felt great anxiety about the education and rearing of his children, “a great charge, for which I am very unfit” (*Letters of B.*, 2. 391). He kept the two elder daughters with him in London, where they sometimes “had little parties for cards and musick, and [did] wonderfully well” (*ibid.*, 2. 433); the boys and the youngest girl were at schools not far away (*ibid.*, 2. 374, 375, 381–85, 388, 399, 431, 435). Altogether they seem to have been a “joyful credit” to him in the little life that he had remaining, and from their uncle David’s testimony as to their “most affectionate, exemplary manner during his confinement” (*ibid.*, 2. 468), they were “a support and comfort at death.”

No. XLVI. July 1781.

## [ON PARENTS &amp; CHILDREN &amp; EDUCATION]

*Quanto plus propinquorum, quo major assinium numerus, tanto gratio-*  
*sior senectus.*—TACITUS.<sup>1</sup>

“The more numerous our relations and connections, the more comfortable is old age.”

IT HAS often occurred to me, that if children were rare, they would be valued beyond every thing else that we can possess. I mean children in general without the particular endearment of being our own in the mysterious sense of parentage; For what can be so pleasing as little beings who are just ourselves in miniature, whose figure is completely the same on a small scale, and who have the same faculties of mind that we have, though weaker in degree. Nothing but our being accustomed to see numbers of children at all periods of our lives, and in all places, could prevent us from making them the most curious and delightful objects of attention and study.

Suppose a man, who had never seen a child, were to be thrown upon an island with no other inhabitants upon it at the time but children; how surprisingly would he be entertained with the little people, their language, their manners, their sentiments! We must suppose him all the time to have a persuasion, that they are a species of mankind, and we must divest ourselves of our habitual notion of the imperfection of children in all respects, so as to think of him addressing himself to them as he would do to any nation of his own size, with which he was utterly unacquainted. He would no doubt find out their ignorance. But upon my word I doubt if they would not appear to him more enlightened than the Savage nations which have of late been discovered.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, it must be considered, that a nation of children would not appear to a new observer like the nation of

<sup>1</sup> *Germania, 20.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Hyp. 9*, in which Boswell expresses this opinion more definitely, as a result of observing Cartwright's Eskimos, and conversing with Captain Cook about the South Sea Islanders.

Apparently he liked this whimsical notion of manhood and infancy in help-

Lilliputians, so ingeniously imagined by Swift, amongst whom every thing was as much formed as in any other nation; so that the only difference consisted in the size of the people: For a nation of children would be discovered to be imperfect beings, and like unripe fruit, to have the shape, but not the substance.<sup>3</sup> *Lucian*, in his dialogue called *The Kings Fisher*, makes a very good use of the essential difference between children and men; "How much does a man surpass a child in strength and address; so as one would beat a million. If then we have so much advantage over those of our own species, what must that of the Creator be over the creature!"

But we must be aware of allowing ourselves to think, that our children may be made to serve only as an amusement to us.<sup>4</sup> I indeed fear, that this is an error too common, and hence it is, that education is often so much neglected. We should seriously consider, that we are bound, in duty to the children themselves, and to the society of which we are members, to give them such

less intimacy, since he tried to tease Johnson with it on one occasion (*Life of J.*, 2. 116):

"If, Sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a new born child with you, what would you do?" JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, I should not much like my company."

In the original text of this paragraph, *unacquainted* was *unacquainted*, and the last sentence began, *But upon my my word*; Boswell left both errors uncorrected.

<sup>3</sup> Boswell is fond of this simile; see his characterization of man in his early years, in *Hyp.* 42—"An imperfect animal—He is green—He is not substantiated," and his remarks to Wilkes (*Letters of B.*, 1. 82) on marriage—"an excellent fruit when ripe. You have been unlucky enough to eat it green."

<sup>4</sup> Not only for the sake of the children themselves, but of the company to which, in Boswell's opinion, they were too often introduced. Cf. his statement in the *Life of J.*, 3. 33:

I said, I disliked the custom which some people had of bringing their children into company, because it in a manner forced us to pay foolish compliments to please their parents.

Johnson, in spite of his fondness for children (*Life of J.*, 4. 227), agreed with him briefly here, and later criticized Bennet Langton because "he has his children too much about him"; Boswell enters an emphatic note to the passage (*Life of J.*, 3. 145 n. 3):

This very just remark I hope will be constantly held in remembrance by parents, who are in general too apt to indulge their own fond feelings for their children at the expence of their friends. The common custom of introducing them after dinner is highly injudicious. It is agreeable enough that they should appear at any other time; but they should not be suffered to poison the moments of festivity by attracting the attention of the company, and in a manner compelling them from politeness to say what they do not think.

instruction as will best fit them for being usefull and agreeable. If we ourselves are rational, and have leisure, we may have much pleasure in teaching them ourselves, and may experience what Thomson poetically describes

“Delightful task to rear the tender thought,  
“And teach the young idea how to shoot.”<sup>5</sup>

But in my opinion very few parents are fit for this task; and happily there are many professional teachers, whose natural cast of mind and long practice have rendered very expert in education, and to whom it is really the highest satisfaction of which they are capable.

A multitude of books has been written upon education; and the number is encreased from time to time. In most of them some useful hints may be found; but it is remarkable, that in all of them, the great Mr. Locke's not excepted, there is a mixture of whim. In his indeed there is very little; and as I have profited by it myself, I would recommend it to others.<sup>6</sup> After all, however, it is my opinion, that the ordinary mode of education which experience for ages has justified, and which has produced so many usefull and eminent men in all departments, is as good as any that human wisdom can devise. I would allow parents and preceptors to follow their own fancies as suited to the different talents and tempers of the children under their care, in various particulars of instruction. But as to these I would not have any general system framed, as I have never seen one that did not seem to me either impracticable or ridiculous.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In *The Seasons (Spring)*. The loose structure of the ensuing sentence in the text is characteristic of Boswell's hasty composition; cf. *Hyp.* 59 n. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Boswell probably alludes to *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), although Locke was also the author of *Some Thoughts concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman* and *The Conduct of the Understanding*—published posthumously in 1706.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Boswelliana*, 233:

Boswell compared himself to the ancient Corinthian brass. “I am,” said he, “a composition of an infinite variety of ingredients. I have been formed by a vast number of scenes of the most different natures, and I question if any uniform education could have produced a character so agreeable.”

See also *Hyp.* 10, 26, where Boswell deprecates formal systems of directing the mind. It is possible that these remarks form part of his effort to see another

Good education is no doubt of infinite consequence, and it is strange that an anxiety for having our children well educated should not be as universal as that for having children;<sup>8</sup> since it in a great measure makes the difference between children being the cause of happiness or of misery to parents. Amongst the ancients the desire of having children was still stronger than amongst us, and cherished by more encouragements. Yet they were sensible, that children might be either a good or an evil. Pelopidas, who had a worthless son, questioned Epaminondas if he was not wanting to his country in not having children. "Take care (said he) that you have not done worse by having such a descendant; but I am not without a representative, since I leave behind me the battle of Leuctra, which will make me not only survive, but be immortal."<sup>9</sup> In my last paper I ascribed the universal desire of

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point of view than his own, since in his own life he was constantly in search of some system by which to direct his activities (*Hyp.* 26 n. 10, 44 n. 4, 63 and notes, 64 n. 9, 66 n. 1); in particular, his indolence had taught him that it was only "a man of vigorous intellect and arduous curiosity" such as Johnson, to whom "reading without a regular plan may be beneficial" (*Life of J.*, 1. 496). Lord Auchinleck was clearly a friend to systematic study; see *Hyp.* 50, which repeats his advice to *read chronologically*. Boswell (possibly from a wish to please his father) once prevailed upon Johnson to outline a scheme of study for him, but when it was given he was so dazzled by the eloquence with which Johnson delivered it, that he could not grasp the essential plan (*Life of J.*, 1. 475, 533); later it was written out for him—he presents it in the *Life*, 1. 547 ff.

It is probable that Boswell in rejecting system is echoing the advice which Johnson gave him at all other times; see *Life of J.*, 1. 496; 3. 219; 4. 24; *Hebr.*, 97; *Boswelliana*, 209; and *Letters of B.*, 1. 23, 24:

I mentioned Fresnoy [*Méthode pour étudier l'histoire*] to him. But he advised me not to follow a plan and he declared that he himself never followed one above two days. He advised me to read just as inclination prompted me which alone, he said, would do me any good; for I had better go into company, than read a set task.

He advises me to combat idleness as a distemper; to read five hours every day; but to let inclination direct me what to read. He is a great enemy to a stated plan of study.

Johnson's reason for objecting to fixed tasks of reading may be seen in *The Idler*, 74 (cf. *Hyp.* 67 n. 16).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the end of the second paragraph in *Hyp.* 45; this is an example of the way in which Boswell links his essays—a brief remark in one providing the theme for the next.

<sup>9</sup> Cornelius Nepos, *Life of Epaminondas*, 10. Boswell is probably quoting

having children, to that imagination of continuing ourselves, which is strong in human nature. Were it not for this, I question if we should find the wish for children so prevalent as it is. For, in truth, a man of cool reason, who should sit down before hand and seriously consider whether he should bring upon himself the burthen of maintaining, and the duty of educating a number of people of whom he then knows nothing, would be apt to start back and to think himself better without them.<sup>10</sup>

The unthankfulness of children to their parents is a very disagreeable circumstance. They, in general, consider all they get as their due; and there is more gratitude felt to a stranger who has made a small present than to parents from whom they have received a thousand times more. It is not uncommon to see parents who have pinched themselves and secured large fortunes to their children shamefully disregarded by them. This I think should make a wise man take care not to sacrifice his own happiness to that of his children. But indeed I heard a nobleman, who was himself both a father and a saving man, fairly own, that in his opinion no man ever lived penuriously and laid up money, unless he had his own inclination to gratify in doing so. Some more generous instances there certainly are; and I would so far avoid gross selfishness that my children should at least share with me in the enjoyment of my fortune.

There is nothing so ill judged in the conduct of a father, as to keep his heir in such scanty circumstances that it is impossible for him not to view his father's death as an event upon which he is to make a transition from indigence and difficulties to opulence and enjoyment.<sup>11</sup> Early affection may revive at times and counter-

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from memory; the last clauses of his quotation present an idea somewhat different from the usual translation:

"But neither can I," he added, "want issue; for I leave behind me a daughter, the battle of Leuētra, that must by necessity not only survive me, but must be immortal."

<sup>10</sup> See the debate on this point which has been going on through several essays; the present passage, like the comments in *Hyp.* 13 and 43, is a contrast to *Hyp.* 41, in which Boswell expresses his confidence that "our natural appetites and affections will long prove a sufficient counterbalance to the selfish disadvantages which cool judgement may discover in the connubial engagement."

<sup>11</sup> This is distinctly a reflection of Boswell's own situation. He had "madly" given up his birthright to his father (probably on some occasion when his debts were settled for him), and since Lord Auchinleck married a second time on his

act the wish which is pressed upon him; but the general tenor of his thoughts must, in the very nature of things, be ungracious, since he cannot but feel that his father is not affectionate towards him. I would by no means have a father reduce himself to insignificance by too liberal a surrender to his heir, as some have injudiciously done. But I would have such a kindly partition made, as that the son may be comfortable while his father lives; and if he is not very unworthy, he will remain contented in his subordinate state with respect to the family; and do all in his power to soothe the old age of a parent whom he loves.

It is not however by a partition of fortune alone, that a father preserves the affection of his children; there must be a communication of kindness; there must be *love*, that chief quality in the Christian character. I knew two brothers, one of whom was remarkable for solidity of understanding and attention to business, and augmented his fortune considerably, by which he was enabled to give large provisions to his children, but then he was uniformly cold and distant in his behaviour to them. The other was volatile and expensive, and dissipated all he had, so that he could not give his children any provisions at all; but then he was easy and fond, and let them have as long as he had. The latter was more beloved by his children than the former.

If to a conduct which commands the esteem of their children, parents unite what attracts their love, there cannot fail to be a great deal of happiness derived from their offspring. And surely the situation of those who are surrounded with an agreeable progeny, must find life more pleasant, and old age more easy, than they do, who have none to whom they have transmitted existence.

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son's wedding-day, Boswell was constantly in terror of his father's "making some bad settlement" (*Letters of B.*, I. 235). See also *Hyp.* 45 n. 5. As time went on, Boswell became very frank in his reckonings upon his father's length of life (*ibid.*, I. 241):

I have severe paroxysms of anxiety; and how unhappy is it for a man to have no security for what is dear to him but his father's death! Do not reason against me. Try to comfort me. My father is visibly failing. Perhaps, I may get him yet to do as I wish. In the mean time, I have written *plainly* to my brother David to see if he will settle on my wife and daughters in case of his succeeding.

The situation was not uncommon in Boswell's day, of course. See *The Spectator*, 222, 263, and *Letters of J.*, I. 361:

Poor \*\*\*\*! I am sorry for him. It is sad to give a family of children no pleasure but by dying. It was said of Otho: *Hoc tantum fecit nobile quod periit*. It may be changed to \*\*\*\*: *Hoc tantum fecit utile*.

No. XLVII. Aug. 1781.

## [ON THE NEW FREEZING DISCOVERY]

*Cedens glacialis auris.—VALERIUS FLACCUS.<sup>1</sup>*

“Yielding submissive to the powers of frost.”

IN A FORMER number I intimated that I had a few essays formerly published, which I intended to adopt into this series. I hope the following will prove acceptable to my readers. It appeared in the Publick Advertiser, June 2, 1770.

“THE great progress that has of late years been made in every branch of philosophy cannot but give much joy to every man of an inquisitive turn.<sup>2</sup> Such a man am I. But I fairly own, that my studies have generally led me rather to what was useful than to what was curious. The most ingenious and beautiful theories are nothing to me, in comparison of any kind of discovery that can be reduced to practice.

A discovery lately made by a celebrated naturalist has given me more satisfaction than any thing I have met with of a long time. This discovery is the art of congealing living animals in such a manner, that they shall remain exactly in the same state they were in when the frigorific operation is performed, so that although when frozen every power is locked up, whenever the cold is dissolved, and their frame released from its chilly shackles by a gradual and gentle warmth, they shall appear with the same sentiments, passions, looks; in a word, with the same qualities in every respect.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Argonautica*, 4. 722. *Glacialibus* should be *glaciantibus*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 9 n. 6 for further praise of curiosity.

<sup>3</sup> Probably an exaggerated account of the refrigerating device invented by Dr. William Cullen (1710–1790) in 1755. It was the earliest machine to reduce temperature by means of a vacuum, which Cullen produced by a pump alone. Boswell knew this chemist-physician well; he quoted Cullen's opinion on sleep (*Life of J.*, 3. 192), consulted him about Johnson's health (*ibid.*, 4. 303), and introduced him to Johnson in Edinburgh (*Hebr.*, 51). Dr. Cullen was a very popular lecturer on chemistry and medicine at the University of Edinburgh. He was one of the first university teachers to give up the practice of lecturing on the sciences in Latin, and his early biographers felt it necessary to explain (on sound evidence) that he made the change on principle, and not through ignorance.

All the world has read of the marvellous story told by the traveller of a frost at sea, which was so intense, that all the words uttered by the crew and passengers on board a ship were congealed in the air, and remained fixed there till a thaw came; and then there was such a jargon and medley of voices, such volleys of oaths, and such an incoherent variety of sentences, that it seemed as if one of the four elements had been seized with madness.<sup>4</sup>

This story may make cautious people somewhat slow in believing the New Freezing Discovery which I have mentioned. I own I have not yet seen the operation: but as I am well informed of its success, or at least of its being much nearer to success than the philosopher's stone, I am indulging myself in pleasing speculations on the great use of which it will be to society.

Inconstancy, impatience, and many other qualities in human nature, are often not only very troublesome to individuals, but prevent the best schemes and noblest plans from taking effect. For these qualities the New Freezing Discovery affords an effectual remedy. Is a person impatient or fretful? freeze him. Is his inconstancy such that he cannot remain of the same mind two days together? Whenever he is found in a proper frame, let him give his orders, and then shut him up in ice till such time as it is of no consequence whether he is constant or no.

Jealousy, the most tormenting of all the passions, the most hurtful to human repose, and the most baneful in its effects, will be entirely prevented by the New Freezing Discovery. A Spanish padlock is a ludicrous invention: it is also an uncertain security; for it may be picked, or a key may chance to fit it. But when a husband has his wife well frozen, he may go from home in full security, bidding defiance to her keenest lovers; for though good St. Anthony made a woman of snow for himself in the desert,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The story occurs as far back as Lucian, and appears in the *Pantagruel* of Rabelais, 4. 55. Lord Chesterfield alludes to it as "a vulgar notion" of conditions in Greenland (*Letters to his Son*, 1. 81), and quotes Butler, who refers to the fancy in his *Hudibras*, 1. 148. Perhaps the most familiar modern rendering of the fancy is that of *The Tatler*, 254, which also quotes *Hudibras*, and makes allusion to Sir John Mandeville.

<sup>5</sup> Boswell distorts the legend of a most respectable saint in order to maintain the flippant tone of this essay. By all accounts, St. Anthony humbled the flesh by lying in snow to vanquish the temptations (in the shape of earthly beauties) which Satan presented to him.

we do not read that his gallantry needed much restraint. Nor will it be in the power of any adventurous lover to melt the cold bosom of a lady in her husband's absence; for the New Freezing Discovery is so admirably contrived, that by the same calculation as our modern brick houses are built, a person may be frozen to last for any given time, before the expiration of which it would be instant death to attempt a thaw. Indeed, supposing it could be produced, there would seldom be any danger; for as the lady would be incapable of repairing to a milliner's or a bagnio, could make no tender signs from her window, nor drive post to the *Spaniard at Hampstead*,<sup>6</sup> no harm could be done but with the most direct and shameless intervention of her maid. We may indeed imagine some interesting scenes. My lord gone a long journey. His poor lady congealed in her bed-room, and her maid, with all the anxiety that a purse of fifty guineas can procure, chafing her temples, and endeavouring to warm her into life for the ardent captain, who will die if he does not possess her. Fine words! But shew me the lover ardent enough to take his icy mistress to his bosom; and if my lord returns, and finds her thawed before her time, 'tis proof positive; 'tis as bad as bearing a first child before her time. The spiritual court would ask no more. Few women after being thawed, and having enjoyed the raptures of love, would submit to be frozen up again. They, who would submit to this, must have as violent a passion as the women of India, who throw themselves into the fire along with their dead husbands. Violent heat is not worse to bear than violent cold.

This New Freezing Discovery will be of infinite service to all besieged towns. If their provisions run short, they have no more to do but freeze up the greatest part of the inhabitants, leaving only as many soldiers as may be sufficient for mounting guard, and as many other people as may be sufficient to take care of the town, and be ready to treat for a capitulation. Nay the influence of this New Freezing Discovery may have very important effects on a whole nation; for when people are murmuring on account of a scarcity and dearness of provisions, they may be frozen up by a royal

<sup>6</sup> An inn just outside the city, which at various periods had the reputation of being the resort of highwaymen, and persons otherwise fleeing the proprieties or the law. It was still standing in 1904; a description and drawing of it were printed in the modern London Magazine for that year (12. 20, 23-24).

proclamation for a certain time; the order to be renewed always till provisions become cheap. Had this been known two years ago, it would have prevented all the disputes about the important question of the suspending and dispensing prerogative in the exportation of corn.<sup>7</sup>

And what would the ministry have given could they have frozen up Wilkes and his mob all this time. Much mischief would it have prevented; and I suppose an act would have been made, ordaining all his majesty's justices of the peace, and magistrates of boroughs, to congeal, freeze, and deaden with cold, all who shall traiterously exclaim, bawl, and roar Wilkes and Liberty.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> In the time of Charles II, the export and import of grain were permitted, but in 1670 the law provided that exportation should be prohibited when the price at home was 53*s.* 4*d.* a quarter. In 1689 an act was passed encouraging the export of grain, on the supposition that it would encourage wheat-growing, and provide both money and cheap bread at home. So little did these and related acts benefit the state of affairs that in 1766 the scarcity and dearness of bread caused serious rioting. The Crown issued a proclamation prohibiting further export of grain, although the price set by law for such action had not been reached; the ministry supported the embargo—the Earl of Chatham asserted that he had advised it. Disputes aroused by the legality of the embargo continued for some time after the occasion. Boswell, in the *Life of J.*, (4. 366) says that the quarrel lay between the ministry and the opposition headed by the Duke of Bedford, and that it concerned the ministry's assumption of power to extend the time for importing corn; Birkbeck Hill, in a note (citing the *Annual Register* and Dicey's *Law of the Constitution*) states that the cause of disagreement was the exercise by the Crown of a power to dispense with laws—the objectors being those "occasional patriots" temporarily out of office and power.

<sup>8</sup> For a biographical note on John Wilkes, see *Hyp.* 49 n. 6. On his return from exile in 1768, he coolly presented himself as candidate for Parliament from Middlesex, although he had fled from England to escape the consequences of his daring opposition to George III and his ministry. The mob regarded him as a patriot suffering martyrdom for his republican sympathies, and placed him at the head of all competitors by the simple method of blocking all avenues to the voting place at Brentford, and allowing no one to pass without an avowal of sympathy for his cause. In Whitehead's *Variety*, the traveling squire and his lady

Through Brentford win a passage free  
By roaring *Wilkes and Liberty!*

Wilkes was expelled from the House in 1769, and the result was an unprecedented struggle between the administration and the electors, in which three re-elections of Wilkes, accompanied by very serious rioting, finally convinced

I am hopeful that this New Freezing Discovery will in time be improved to a wonderful degree, and that we shall be as expert in the art of freezing as soldiers are in the art of firing. Perhaps methods may be discovered of communicating cold in as subtile and quick a way as electrical fire is made to pass from one body to another. When such perfection is attained, we shall see a very entertaining variety of experiments. Here will be a fine lady fervently adored by a sincere and worthy man to whom she will listen with seeming complacency. But the moment that a handsomer, richer, or more glittering admirer appears, she will freeze the man of worth till she tries if she can catch the other; and in this manner perhaps a beautiful coquet may go on till half the marriageable young men of her acquaintance have almost perished with cold. I have a notion, indeed, that no man of spirit, who has once felt the frost of his mistress, will be inclined to renew his flame.<sup>9</sup>

Our statesmen will, no doubt, have freezing machines in their levee rooms, to stop the complaints of broken promises, and the importunate solicitations of needy sycophants; nor will it be at all inconvenient for many men of rank and figure about town to treat

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King and ministry that "Wilkes and his mob" had best not be antagonized further. Boswell flings another sarcasm at Wilkes's *liberty* in his remarks on elections at the end of this essay. See also *Boswelliana*, 274, 300, 322.

Boswell always professed considerable personal affection for this scapegrace, but it cannot be assumed therefore that the anonymous aspersions in *The Hypochondriack* are either cowardly or hypocritical. In his letters to Wilkes, Boswell frankly stated a determined opposition to his friend's political ideas, and rallied him upon associating with *Republican dogs* (*Letters of B.*, I. 68, 72, 75, 81, 83, 227, 248); Wilkes retorted in kind by jokes at the expense of the Scotch (see *Hyp.* 8 n. 3). Such mutual jocose recrimination formed a great part of the pleasure the two found in each other's society; see Boswell's careful note in explanation of this fact, attached to his record of Dr. Johnson's "strong satirical sally" against Wilkes, which Boswell evidently thought a little too strong (*Hebr.*, 386 n. 4):

I think it incumbent on me to make some observation on this strong satirical sally on my classical companion, Mr. Wilkes. Reporting it lately from memory, in his presence, I expressed it [in a manner which] may be said *renchérir* on Dr. Johnson; but on looking into my Journal, I found it as above, and would by no means make any addition. Mr. Wilkes received both readings with a good humour which I cannot enough admire. Indeed both he and I (as, with respect to myself, the reader has more than once had occasion to observe in the course of this Journal,) are too fond of a *bon mot*, not to relish it, though we should be ourselves the object of it.

<sup>9</sup> Boswell himself took pride in being such a man of spirit; see *Hyp.* 26 n. 10.

their dunning creditors in the same manner, and instead of froth to give them a little ice.

Parents and guardians, and all who have the charge of young people, will gain great advantages by this New Freezing Discovery which will be of infinite service to our city apprentices during the holidays. In vain are maxims of prudence, formed by age and experience, inculcated on those who are in a fermentation of spirits. But let a young buck's blood boil ever so fiercely, the freezing machine can stop him in his career. If a young lady is so high-mettled as to disdain control, and throw off the restraints of decency, frost will sober her. We shall not hear of elopements so often as we do, and many a trip to Scotland will be effectually prevented; for I doubt much, if after lying congealed for a week or two, either my lady, mistress, or miss, will be so eager to run off with a light-headed lover.

Another very great and important advantage from the New Freezing Discovery remains yet to be mentioned. Self-murder has long been the reproach of the English: the climate it is said disposes them to melancholy, and while under a fit of despair they destroy themselves; but the New Freezing Discovery will remedy this miserable infatuation. For "in the gloomy month of November," the English, instead of hanging or drowning themselves,<sup>10</sup> will certainly prefer having themselves frozen up, by which their senses being benumbed, the foul fiend of *Hypochondria* cannot hurt them; and when it is fine weather, up they will spring like swallows to the enjoyment of happiness. I expect to see very soon in all quarters of the metropolis sign posts inscribed with "Cupping, Bathing, Bleeding, and FREEZING."

I can indeed foresee many inconveniences that may be occasioned by this new discovery. A lady, instead of being frozen herself, may freeze her husband, and so have full liberty to enjoy the company of her gallant; and young people may in the same manner chain those who ought to have authority over them: but though this useful discovery, like all others, is no doubt liable to be abused, it must certainly be owned that we have had none of a long time so generally beneficial, and I am persuaded that if it is

<sup>10</sup> A reference to the quotation from *The Spectator* in Hyp. I n. 13. For a general discussion of the melancholy English, see Introduction, III. 1.

taken into consideration by the legislature, such salutary regulations will be made, that few will have reason to complain, which is more than can be said of our game acts.<sup>11</sup>

No doubt something must be left as an incitement to activity and enterprize. For instance, in contested elections the party that freezes up its antagonists deserves to gain. Formerly a party would endeavour to drink down its antagonists, but now the mode will be to freeze them up; so that instead of saying, we had devilish hot work of it at Northampton, the saying will be, we had devilish cold work of it.

And to be sure we shall have freezing at all our elections. Cudgel-players will no longer be hired to attend at Brentford-Butts, in order to enforce the freedom of election.<sup>12</sup> A parcel of good clever FREEZERS will do much better; it will be truly curious to see the freezing machines of whig and tory, court and country, or whatever the parties are, drawn up on each side like the artillery of two contending armies.

For my own part, Mr. Woodfall,<sup>13</sup> I find that I have written so long an essay on this favourite subject, that you and all your readers are so heartily tired of me, that you wish to have me frozen directly, to get rid of my nonsense, and see an experiment made of the New Freezing Discovery."

<sup>11</sup> "By the law of England, no one at this time, with a few strictly specified exceptions, was permitted to shoot or fish even on his own grounds, unless he possessed a freehold estate of at least £100 a year, or a leasehold of at least £150; the sale of game was absolutely prohibited."—Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*, 6. 262.

<sup>12</sup> See n. 8 above.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Sampson Woodfall (1739–1805), who succeeded his father, Henry Woodfall (d. 1769), as proprietor of the *Public Advertiser*. Early proficient in the classics, he became an unusually helpful apprentice to his father in 1754, and by the age of nineteen was entrusted with the whole conduct of the paper; his name first appeared as publisher, however, in 1760. Throughout his career he was defendant in various suits for libel because of the freedom of his columns; he asserted that the policies of his paper were created by its readers, whose wishes dictated his offerings. His journal became famous through the publication of the letters of Junius.

A younger brother, William Woodfall (1745–1803), assisted for a time in the family's paper, but later on acquired greater public notice as a reporter of parliamentary proceedings and as theatrical critic.

## No. XLVIII. Sept. 1781.

## [ON SLEEP AND DREAMS]

*Somnia neque sua neque aliena de se negligebat. Philippensi acie quamvis statuisset non egredi tabernaculum propter valetudinem, egressus est tamen, amici somnio monitus; cessitque res prosperè, quando captis castris, lectica ejus quasi ibi cubans remansisset, concursu hostium confossa atque lacerata est.—SUETONIUS.<sup>1</sup>*

“Dreams, whether his own or those of others concerning himself, he “never neglected. In the field of Philippi, although he had resolved “not to go out of his tent, on account of his health, he did however go “out of it, being warned by a Dream of one of his friends; and the “event was happy, when the camp being taken, his bed, as if he had “remained lying in it, was pierced and torn by a concourse of the “enemy.”

THE remarkable circumstance in the motto to this paper is related of *Octavius Cæsar Augustus*; and as there is no reason to doubt of the seriousness and fidelity of the historian, it has disposed my mind to think of Sleep and Dreaming.

The Psalmist’s reflection, that we “are fearfully and wonderfully made,”<sup>2</sup> is a stroke of just and awful eloquence. In truth, man is in every part of his nature a mystery; and after all the observations and systems of philosophers, there is very little known with clear and distinct certainty. A multitude of curious facts is collected in “Wanley’s Wonders of the little World Man”—which a noble lord of my acquaintance has constantly by him as an inexhaustable fund of entertainment.<sup>3</sup> But the essence and

<sup>1</sup> *Octavius*, 91. In the magazine text, *confossa* was rendered *confessa*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

<sup>2</sup> *Psalms*, 139. 14. Boswell wrongly includes a plural verb within his quotation marks.

<sup>3</sup> *Wonders of the Little World, or a General History of Man*, was the work of Nathaniel Wanley (1634–1680), non-conformist divine; it was published in six books in London in 1678, and new editions of it continued to appear as late as 1806. The title page promises “Many Thousand most interesting Relations of Persons remarkable for BODILY PERFECTIONS or DEFECTS, collected from the writings of the most approved Historians, Philosophers, and Physicians, of all Ages and Countries. Forming a Complete System of the Mental and Corporeal Powers and Defects of Human Nature; and intended to increase KNOWLEDGE, to promote VIRTUE, to discourage VICE, and to furnish

cause and reason of these facts cannot be discovered by human sagacity.

Sleep, to which we are so much habituated, which in the dawn of our existence is the employment of the greatest part of our time; and in the whole course of our lives, occupies a large proportion of it, if the words employment and occupy can with propriety be applied to that state—Sleep when considered with attention is one of the most unaccountable and marvellous things in our whole œconomy.

In the mythology of the ancients, Sleep is very well represented as the brother of Death, the one having much resemblance of the other. Sleep is called in our own language, the image of Death; and Shakespeare gives it a still stronger epithet, “the death of each day’s life.”<sup>4</sup> It is indeed striking to think, that in the usual course of existence we never are four and twenty hours together in perfect consciousness; but that life, in the full sense of the word, is broken off continually at certain short periods, when we resign ourselves to a totally different state of being. When in a gloomy frame I have sat up late in the night, under dreary apprehensions, frightened to lie down and sink into helplessness and forgetfulness.<sup>5</sup> In vain shall we endeavour to watch the moment at which we pass from Waking to Sleeping, and expect that we shall be equally conscious of the change as we are of other transitions, such as that of being separated from land, and swimming in water. There is in Sleep a kind of insensibility which is absolutely

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Topics for Innocent and Ingenious CONVERSATION.” Book 1 concerns the perfections and deformities of man’s body; 2, analogous extremes in regard to his senses; 3, his virtues; 4, his vices; 5, historical events; 6, miscellaneous curiosities such as “princes and persons [who] have been fortunate in finding hidden treasure.”

The author, though apparently credulous to an unusual degree himself, desires in his preface to “impose nothing upon any man’s belief, but leave every reader at his full liberty for the degrees of his faith in these matters”; to that end he provides full references for even his wildest anecdotes. He apologizes “to as many as shall seem displeased that I have so far concerned the feminine gender in the history of man,” and gravely explains that “under the notion of Man both sexes are comprehended: so that a history of Man (according to my intention) is no other than the history of Mankind.”

<sup>4</sup> *Macbeth*, 2. 2. 38. Boswell alludes to the passage in *Hyp.* 38.

<sup>5</sup> See *Hyp.* 16, 39; *Letters of B.*, 1. 239; 2. 431.

incompatible with our perceiving it. Had a man never experienced Sleeping and waking again, he would shrink as much from Sleep, as we all do from death; and therefore I please myself with a comfortable analogy, by thinking that our Creator gives us every night and day an instance of a change of existence, which though it seems at first to put an end to bodily activity and mental vivacity, does yet restore both with additional vigour. Should not this miniature example, this model of death, persuade us that the last Sleep of man will be similar, and that he shall awake in a bright morning of immortality. I acknowledge, however, that independent of Revelation, and above all of the illustrious proof exhibited in the resurrection of our SAVIOUR Jesus Christ, after being dead and buried, this hope would not be sufficiently strong in all states of mind.<sup>6</sup>

In what manner Sleep produces such benignant effects upon the human constitution as it generally does, I cannot discover myself, nor have I found it discovered by others. For the pulse is higher when we are asleep than when we are awake; and the faculties of the mind are oftener in keener exercise. But there is no doubt of the fact; and accordingly, one of the chief articles of refined luxury is agreeable and elegant accommodation during the time appropriated to repose. I have sometimes been apt to laugh when I contemplated a bed-room with all its contrivances, and thought of deliberately pulling off my clothes, shutting out the light, and

<sup>6</sup> To the unfortunate Boswell it was not always sufficient. He had been sceptical in his youth, and his attachment to Johnson arose chiefly from the sense of comforting certainty in spiritual matters which he found in his friend (*Letters of B.*, 1. 27, 29, 30, 40). Throughout his middle life—unless he kept in touch with Johnson, on whom he still depended—the uncertainty and fear returned from time to time; see his *Letters*:

I was lately troubled a good deal, as formerly, about human liberty, and God's prescience. I had recourse to the great Montesquieu, in one of his *Lettres Persannes*, and had the subject made clear to me. . . . Are you ever disturbed with abstract doubts? (January 1775—1. 206—207.)

We must own, my friend, that moral and religious truths are not such as that we can contemplate them by reason with a constant certainty. The disposition of our tempers, of our spirits, influences our persuasion; though we know that we may help it in part. (August 1775—1. 239.)

Is it not difficult to guard one's self from doubting or distrusting in some degree when one is deeply afflicted, and has no light in prospect? (May 22, 1789—2. 372.)

See also *ibid.*, 2. 306, 378, and *Hyp.* 39, 52, 54, 55, 67, and notes; *Hebr.*, 321.

laying myself down for six, seven, or eight hours. It seemed to be a very strange practice while I could abstract the idea of its effects so often experienced.

I cannot help thinking that Sleep is one of the best enjoyments allowed to us in our present state. *Shakespeare* seems to have been fully sensible of its value, as appears from the soliloquies of *Henry IV.* and *Macbeth* upon that subject, in which there are so many pleasing images introduced as shew that the poet had felt it as more than a negative good.<sup>7</sup> *Thomson* therefore, is in my opinion, in the wrong, when he treats it with contempt and censure:

“And is there aught in Sleep can charm the wise,  
To lie in dull oblivion, losing half  
The precious moments of too short a life.”<sup>8</sup>

Could life be passed in the perpetual acquisition of knowledge and virtue, the moments spent in mere agreeable existing might be considered as lost. But as that is not permitted to us, Sleep may be as justifiable as many waking occupations, the sole object of which is to amuse.<sup>9</sup>

Absolute, unfeeling, and unconscious, or as it is well expressed, “dead Sleep,” to be sure cannot charm either the wise or the foolish. But that kind of Sleep is not in any degree a matter of choice; so that he who is thus fixed cannot be upbraided in *Thomson’s* words with

“Falsely luxurious will not man awake,”

for he has no *will* either for or against it, and no *power* to awake. We are equally passive too in Sleep during which we have pleasant dreams; but the time so employed cannot properly be charged with “dull oblivion,” for we are then as happy as in most situations when awake, so that it has been made an ingenious metaphysical question, whether a man who should pass half his life miserably asleep, and the other half happily awake, or in the reverse way, should be really considered as happy or miserable. For my own part supposing a man to be equally conscious of agree-

<sup>7</sup> See note 4, and 2 *H. IV*, 3. 1. 5, which Boswell quotes again in *Hebr.*, 160.

<sup>8</sup> *The Seasons (Summer)*; part of the passage beginning with the line which Boswell quotes next—“Falsely luxurious, will not man awake?”

<sup>9</sup> For Boswell’s positive advocacy of “mere agreeable existing,” see *Hyp.* 36 n. 10.

able sensations when asleep as when awake, I should reckon one half of such a supposed life an exact counterbalance to the other; for I require consciousness of being happy to the perfection of happiness,<sup>10</sup> and I do not allow those to be happy whom I see sporting in thoughtless gaiety. But such a consciousness or power of reflexion could not subsist in Sleep, and a life so completely divided between happiness and misery would be that of two distinct beings alternately existing in the same body. Let not any of my readers superficially start when I talk of *beings* distinct from *body*. I have learned from Mr. Locke in his *Essay on Human Understanding*, and am convinced from reflexion that we have as clear an idea of spirit as of body, the substance of body or matter being something wherein the many sensible qualities which affect our senses subsist, and the substance of spirit being something

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 14, 15, 26, for other phrasing of this idea. In the *Letters of B.* there occurs a brief self-sketch which explains Boswell's insistence on the point (2. 372):

You have told me that I was the most thinking man you ever knew. It is certainly so as to my own life. I am continually conscious, continually looking back or looking forward and wondering how I shall feel in situations which I anticipate in fancy.

In the *Life of J.*, 2. 10, Johnson expresses a division of the thought which both he and Boswell emphasize constantly:

I mentioned Hume's notion, that all who are happy are equally happy. . . . JOHNSON. "Sir, that all who are happy, are equally happy, is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally satisfied, but not equally happy. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher."

Cf. *ibid.*, 1. 522, and *Hyp.* 9, 23, 59. In moments of gloom Boswell was tempted to wish for "insensibility"—if it were only possible to be conscious of it! (*Letters of B.*, 1. 98.) This emphasis upon consciousness for the complete savoring of any sensation or experience is, I think, the cause of certain characteristic expressions in Boswell's letters, in which he seems suddenly to pause and view himself or a situation objectively, as if he had by some mental trick departed from his own personality and become a spectator. Such ejaculations as "This is a curious discussion"—"What a fellow am I"—"What a motley scene is life"—occur in *Letters of B.*, 1. 18, 104, 106, 108, 112, 116 n. 1, 120, 139–40, 150, 159, 163, 224; 2. 367, 445. The habit in Boswell has been too easily dismissed as merely part of his naïve egotism; it is really something comparable to the singular capacity possessed by most actors, to be within and without one's own character at the same time. It may account for Boswell's interest in dramatics (see Vol. I, p. 24); it is certainly the source of his singular ability to create dramatic effects in a record of conversation. Cf. especially, among countless examples, *Life of J.*, 3. 77 ff., 217, 225, 255, 385; 4. 228; *Hebr.*, 150, 165, 185, 212, 244, 246, 344, 381.

wherein those operations which we experience in ourselves of thinking, knowing, doubting, and a power of motion, subsist.<sup>11</sup>

But that kind of Sleep of which we are conscious, over which we have power, and which is truly luxurious, is Slumbering, or the state between Sleeping and Waking. Most of my readers, I suppose, have felt this; and the unwillingness to be deprived of it cannot be more feelingly expressed than in *Solomon's* speech of the Sluggard: "Yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little folding of the hands to Sleep." There is an eagerness of intreaty for solace in these words; we see a man of indolent enjoyment hugging himself. The state which I have just now been describing is so agreeable, that I have heard of men who ordered themselves to be called at different hours in the night that they might have more frequently the pleasure of falling asleep. A colonel of the guards told me a very good anecdote of a brother officer of that elegant class, who when called by his servant whom he had ordered to come at six, and being told that it was five minutes from that hour, then said he, "Shut the window-boards, let down the curtains, and come and call me when those five minutes are out."

The pleasure of Slumbering and Sleeping must, however, like every other pleasure of sense be taken in moderation, according to every one's constitution, the diversity of which as to the requisite quantity of Sleep is most remarkable. He who finds himself enervated and unfit for the duties of life, by lying too much in bed, ought resolutely to exert his power of activity, and deny himself a gratification which interferes with the purposes of his being. But while that gratification makes him not a worse, but perhaps a better member of society, let him enjoy it and be thankful for the blessing.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Book 2, chap. 23, sec. 5:

We have as clear a notion of the substance of spirit as we have of body: the one being supposed to be (without knowing what it is) the *substratum* to those simple ideas we have from without; and the other supposed (with a like ignorance of what it is) to be the *substratum* to those operations which we experiment in ourselves within. It is plain, then, that the idea of corporeal substance in matter is as remote from our conceptions and apprehensions as that of spiritual substance, or spirit.

<sup>12</sup> Boswell criticizes himself in this passage. Cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 191 ff., where he "talked of the difficulty of rising in the morning"; upon Johnson's describing the unique alarm system of the learned Mrs. Carter, Boswell proceeds—

I said . . . [I] wished there could be some medicine invented which would make one rise without pain, which I never did, unless after lying in bed a very long time. Perhaps

Sleep itself, however inexplicable, is yet less mysterious than Dreaming, the frequent if not the constant effect of it, as to which philosophers have puzzled themselves with a variety of conjectures. An ancient poet says "Dreams are from Jove," and in the Sacred Writings, though we have no general declaration upon the subject, we find *Job* saying to the Almighty, "Thou scarest me with Dreams,"<sup>13</sup> and it is not to be supposed, that he would ascribe bad dreams to Divine agency upon the soul, and not believe the same of good Dreams. *Baxter* has given us a curious theory of Dreaming, in which he ascribes it to the agency of inferior spirits,<sup>14</sup> and seems more positive in his opinion of the soul's perpetual passiveness in Sleep than I think he is warranted to be, or is suitable to the general modesty of his character as a writer.

In my opinion, the operations of the soul in Sleep, like those when we are awake, are sometimes entirely its own, and sometimes, though rarely, are influenced by superior intelligence. How

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there may be something in the stores of Nature which could do this. I have thought of a pulley to raise me gradually; but that would give me pain, as it would counteract my internal inclination. I would have something that can dissipate the *vis inertiae*, and give elasticity to the muscles. As I imagine that the human body may be put, by the operation of other substances, into any state in which it has ever been; and as I have experienced a state in which rising from bed was not disagreeable, but easy, nay, sometimes agreeable; I suppose that this state may be produced, if we knew by what.

It is clear, from the rest of the conversation on the subject, that Boswell had discussed sleep with Lord Monboddo and Dr. Cullen, without the encouragement to slumber which he gives in this essay; Lord Monboddo needed an "air bath" to make him sleep longer, and Dr. Cullen asserted that "a man should not take more sleep than he can take all at once." In the Hebrides, Boswell had attempted to open argument with Johnson on the topic, and failed (*Hebr.*, 401):

In a Magazine I found a saying of Dr. Johnson's, something to this purpose; that the happiest part of a man's life is what he passes lying awake in bed in the morning. I read it to him. He said, "I may perhaps, have said this; for nobody at times, talks more laxly than I do."

Boswell hastily "ventured to suggest to him, that this was dangerous from one of his authority."

<sup>13</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, I. 63; *Job*, 7. 14. In the magazine text, *scarest* was printed *teareſt*, and was left uncorrected by Boswell.

The passage from the *Iliad*, which Boswell gives in a paraphrase of Pope's translation, is used also as heading to *The Rambler*, 44.

<sup>14</sup> See *Hyp.* 26 n. 14. Andrew Baxter, author of *Evidence of Reason in Proof of the Immortality of the Soul* (posthumously published, 1779), believed that the existence of matter is necessary to a belief in God, and that as matter is essentially inert, all changes in it imply superintendence by supernatural powers.

to distinguish between the one and the other I cannot tell. But I believe if we would apply ourselves with constancy to the recollection of our Dreams, a habit of remembering what has passed in Sleep would be formed, and if we would register what we remember, and observe the consequences, we might attain to a good degree of probability in judging of them.

That the interpretation of Dreams was a science very carefully studied by certain wise men in some of the ancient nations, is too well attested to be denied; and supposing the means of acquiring it to be withheld, that would neither disprove its having once existed, nor convince us that it will not exist again. I will not go so far as a metaphysician of my acquaintance, who maintains that every thing which we can conceive, actually *is* somewhere.<sup>15</sup> But, according to the common proverb, I hold that "What has been may be." So far I go in arguing. But I have had facts as to future events communicated by Dreams in these latter days, so well authenticated that I believe them.<sup>16</sup>

When I avow such a belief it may be necessary for my protection against ridicule, to shield myself under great authority—that of *Addison*, who though in one of his *Spectators* he with his

<sup>15</sup> Lord Monboddo (for whom see *Hyp.* 20 n. 2); according to a Mr. Crosbie (*Hebr.*, 51), he "believed the existence of every thing possible; in short, that all which is in *posse* might be found in *esse*."

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Johnson's prayer that he might enjoy the ministrations of his wife's spirit, in dreams or otherwise, and Boswell's comment upon it (*Life of J.*, I. 273):

I present it to the world as an undoubted proof of a circumstance in the character of my illustrious friend, which though some whose hard minds I never shall envy, may attack as superstitious, will I am sure endear him more to numbers of good men. I have an additional, and that a personal motive for presenting it, because it sanctions what I myself have always maintained and am fond to indulge. . . .

What actually followed upon this most interesting piece of devotion by Johnson, we are not informed; but I whom it has pleased God to afflict in a similar manner to that which occasioned it, have certain experience of benignant communication by dreams.

(Mrs. Boswell died in 1789.) The story of Prendergast's foreboding dream (*ibid.*, 2. 210) is also of obvious interest to Boswell. See also *Letters of B.*, 2. 290, 364, in which Boswell takes unpleasing dreams about some friend to be a sign that something must have happened to him. For a general discussion of Boswell's superstitious tendencies, see *Hyp.* 26, and cf. *Hyp.* 63, 67.

admirable good sense, admonishes his readers not to be disturbed by every trifling Dream,<sup>17</sup> yet in another he thus expresses himself:

"I must not omit that argument for the excellency of the soul, which I have seen quoted out of *Tertullian*, namely, its power of divining in Dreams. That several such divinations have been made, none can question who believes the Holy Writings, or who has but the least degree of a common historical faith; there being innumerable instances of this nature in several authors, both ancient and modern, sacred and profane. Whether such dark presages, such visions of the night proceed from any latent power in the soul during this her state of abstraction, or from any communication with the Supreme Being, or from any operation of subordinate spirits, has been a great dispute among the learned; the matter of fact is, I think, incontestible, and has been looked upon as such by the greatest writers who have been never suspected either of superstition or enthusiasm."

To think in this manner is to augment our existence, as instead of reckoning a third of our life mere waste, we habituate ourselves to attend to the result of our hours past in Sleep, and to recover out of the mass of thought produced during that period, very often amusement, and sometimes useful instruction, nor are we to be without expectation that at some extraordinary times we may have impressions made upon our minds in Sleep so strong as may persuade us to act in consequence of them, and thereby to attain good or avoid evil. *Suetonius* has not informed us of the particulars of the Dream by which *Octavius* was warned; whether it was a plain notification of danger, or something that required interpretation. But the emperor we see acted wisely in paying such regard to it as to change his purpose; for by doing so, he escaped being cut in pieces.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Spectator*, 7. See also number 505 (which Boswell ignores), in which divination by dreams is expressly condemned. The paper from which Boswell proceeds to quote is *The Spectator*, 447.

No. XLIX. Oct. 1781.

## [ON IDENTIFICATION BY NUMBERS]

*Armaturæ numeros omnes Tyronem docere.*—VEGETIUS.<sup>1</sup>

“To teach a young soldier all the points of war.”

WHEN Vegetius wrote that sentence in his military treatise which I have prefixed as a motto to this paper, he certainly did not think of the distinguished appearance which *numbers* were one day to make in the clothing of soldiers. To distinguish different divisions of men in the same army by numbers was a very ancient custom, and accordingly we find, that the Roman legions bore the designation of the tenth, the twentieth, and other numbers. But, to mark the number of the legion or regiment, upon the clothing of each particular man belonging to it, is an invention quite modern. Were there a magic number, such as has been fabled, that like a talisman would protect from danger, so that a soldier could say in a solid sense, “*defendit numerus*—my number defends me,” the invention would be valuable indeed. In other respects, there might be a doubtful dispute: for though Cicero uses the phrase “*nullo numero homo*—to signify a man of no estimation;” Horace has “*nos numeri sumus*”—amongst many contemptuous expressions which the gentlemen of the army would brook exceedingly ill.<sup>2</sup>

Upon this subject of numbered buttons, I shall present my readers with an essay which I wrote thirteen years ago, and which appeared in the Public Advertiser January 22, 1768.

“Although I am a true Briton, and of consequence hate the

<sup>1</sup> Boswell quotes from memory, or deliberately paraphrases, the *Epitoma rei militaris* of Flavius Vegetius Renatus, 1. 4. The whole work concerns the “tyro,” but he is not mentioned in this particular passage, which runs, *armaturæ numeros omnes omnesque gestus docere*.

This work is said to have been the standard treatise on military leadership in Europe up to the period when the French Revolution introduced the conception of the nation in arms.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *Philipp.*, 3. 16—“*Bambalio quidam . . . , homo nullo numero;*” Horace, *Epist.*, 1. 2. 27—properly, *nos numeri sumus*. Macleane, in his edition of Horace (London 1881) notes that the phrase is “not uncommon in the Greek tragedians. . . . It means a mere undistinguished heap.”

French, yet I have no objection to our borrowing some of their modes. In particular, I am not a little pleased to find, that we have adopted the French mode of marking the number of their regiment upon the buttons of our officers and soldiers. That mode was much disliked on its first introduction into France. The military wits there used to say, "*Parbleu, nous sommes numerettes comme des fiacres*—we are numbered like hackney coaches." I own however it appears to me, that this mode is highly proper, and will be attended with many beneficial consequences. A young lady, who is shot flying by a handsome red coat at any of our public places, may have a great chance to be able to discover where her hero is to be found. Many pretty children in our country towns, whose mothers have been impregnated, like heathen goddesses, by those of whom they could give no account, may now have it in their power at least to assert their propinquity to one or other of his majesty's regiments. I do not incline to talk of foot-pad adventures, or robbing of hen-roosts, because, although we have now a time of peace, I will not be so ungenerous as to raise any insinuations against *gentlemen soldiers* who may soon be called again to defend us in war. I have said enough to shew, that those who have the clothing of his majesty's troops under their administration, have acted well in the article of buttons.

But, Mr. Woodfall,<sup>3</sup> as I look upon you as a personage who has the good of the public much at heart, I would beg leave to suggest to you, that this numbering fashion might be extended to all ranks of men; for all ranks have certain privileges and properties, which are capable of numeration. For instance, a *lawyer* is never esteemed till he has been of so many years standing at the bar; I would therefore have the gentlemen of the long robe to wear upon their buttons, the number of years which they have served in their profession. It is true, indeed, that they cannot in consistency with their grave character appear with metal buttons; but the number may be neatly wrought on silk buttons, and give employment to the ingenuity of many industrious embroiderers. Perhaps the members of this important profession would rather chuse to number their years by curls in their perriwigs. If that is insisted on in Westminster-hall I shall have no objection.

<sup>3</sup> The editor of the paper for which Boswell wrote the essay originally; for biographical note, see *Hyp.* 47 n. 13.

I know not how the *divines* ought to be numbered, whether according to the plurality of their benefices, according to the books they have written, or according to the disappointments which they have suffered. I think it would not be amiss to number our preachers according to the length of their sermons; so that upon seeing a clergyman enter a church, we should have no more to do but to cast our eyes on his buttons, to be informed how many minutes his discourse is to last. The only danger would be, that many of the audience, on observing the number on a preacher's buttons to exceed 25, might be apt to go away and disturb the congregation.

The *physicians* will, no doubt, wish to be numbered like the lawyers, according to the years they have followed their profession; and they too will probably have something to say for their wigs. But, besides numbering these gentlemen, I would likewise allow them to bear in a conspicuous manner, the grand distinction of *Fellow* and *Licentiate*, which has hitherto, from ignorance and inattention, been so little regarded.<sup>4</sup> This I would propose should be marked on the top of their gold-headed canes, by a large F, or a large L. It may indeed be objected, that the serious and thoughtful method in which many of the faculty press their canes to their mouths or chins, may prevent this distinction from being seen. To which I answer, that if a man is not satisfied with the advice of his physician till he has seen whether there is an F. or an L. on the top

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<sup>4</sup> The *licentiate* was properly one who in the opinion of some examining body was considered to have sufficient ability to practise; in early use the term was sometimes synonymous with *graduate*, but its special sense seems to have covered those holders of a special degree between bachelors and master or doctor. *Fellow* was used much more vaguely; the most distinct example is a sentence in Johnson's *Life of Garth*—"The College of Physicians, in July, 1687, published an edict requiring all the fellows, candidates, and licentiates, to give gratuitous advice to the neighbouring poor." The *fellows* I take to be physicians of experience and worth, officially recognized as members of the body which upheld the standards of the profession. As late as 1806 the use of the term is uncertain; in the *Medical Journal* for 1801 (5. 314) we find "a fellow, that is, any Member who resides within seven miles of London"; in the same journal for 1805 (14. 550)—"a member or licentiate of the College of Physicians."

The importance which members of the profession attached to precision in use of their titles is seen in *Letters of B.*, 1. 208, where Boswell rehearses the complaint of one Dr. Memis, who brought suit against the managers of the Royal Infirmary of Aberdeen for alluding to him in the charter as *Doctor of Medicine*, whereas the term elsewhere used was *Physician*.

of his cane, let him insist on having a peep at it, and if the physician should give him a hearty rap for his pains, I am sure I do not care.

As for mere *Men of Fortune*, who are so much indulged as to be exempted from all professions, they have still good reason to be numbered. I would mark upon their coat buttons the number of their years, and upon their waistcoat buttons, as nearer their hearts, I would mark the number of their rents. In this manner we should know what we are about better than we do at present.

The scheme cannot be complete, unless the *ladies* are also numbered; and I have so good an opinion of the fair sex, that I am persuaded they will not refuse to be upon equal terms with the men. It is true they do not wear buttons; but they wear bracelets; and upon these I would have their numbers inscribed, which will be making these ornaments of still more consequence than any of the hints suggested by the authour of the *Idler*, who has written a paper expressly upon the subject.<sup>5</sup> I cannot venture to take upon me to adjust the articles which it will be proper for the ladies to number. I would hope that some of your ingenious female correspondents will be kind enough to assist me in this. I would, however, propose that the ladies, as well as the gentlemen, should carry the number of their age and of their fortune. When this is once a settled mode, we shall see the parties at routs in much closer conference than ever. Young ladies, on their first coming to town, will find many gallant swains admiring their fine hands, in order to steal a glance at their bracelets; but then ladies may be even with them by taking the gentlemen by the buttons. Many improvements no doubt will be made upon this scheme. Some coquets, perhaps, will insist to bear on their bracelets the number of conquests which they have made. In that case, some of our brilliant men of the town will no doubt demand the same privilege, to shew their victories over the ladies. In this, they will not be upon equal terms; for however strange it is, the women are fond

<sup>5</sup> *The Idler*, 39, from which Boswell manifestly took the scheme of the present essay. It suggests new uses of the bracelet such as these: that ladies not only wear pictures of beloved persons on the arm, but emblems and decorations suggestive of the owner's interests and status; that military men wear reminders of ladies at home, or devices by which to remember towns or fortresses yet to be taken, etc.

of the men who have made conquests; whereas, your killing females are something like those adventurers, who can boast of having killed their men—They may dazzle with a sort of admiration, but every body wishes to shun them as companions.

There is one other species of human beings, whom I had almost forgotten, but who surely ought to be numbered, and that is our *politicians*. But how to number them with any certainty, I should be much at a loss. Their notions of former events might indeed be marked upon their buttons. Thus the steady friends of the House of *Stuart* might wear number 1660, the year of King Charles the Second's restoration, while your zealous *Revolutionists* might have their buttons impressed with the number 1688;<sup>6</sup> and that I may not be forgetful of a gay *exile* with whom I have passed many a pleasant hour, I would remind my readers of a time when there were politicians of number 45.<sup>7</sup> My difficulty as to the numbering of politicians respects those actually engaged in the game, who change about in so wonderful a manner, that it is impossible to denote them by any set of figures. I would therefore propose that their buttons, like those for washing-waist-

<sup>6</sup> The year of the “sad *necessary* shock, the Revolution” (*Letters of B.*, 2. 284), which brought William and Mary to the throne. For the attitude of Johnson and Boswell toward this event, see *Hyp.* 19 n. 10.

<sup>7</sup> The gay *exile* was John Wilkes (1727–1797), radical politician, wit, classical student, and libertine. After some experience in the House of Commons, he expected from his friend Pitt a political plum or two; he attributed his disappointments to the influence of Lord Bute, the Scottish prime minister, and established a periodical called *The North Briton* (1762) in order to attack him. Wilkes wrote a sarcastic criticism of George III's speech opening Parliament in 1763, as Number 45 of this paper. Petty persecution on the part of the administration culminated in sentence for libel, and Wilkes's flight to the Continent. In 1768 he returned to England, where his plea for pardon was rejected. Undaunted, he offered himself as candidate for Parliament from Middlesex, and was elected by a decisive vote. He was refused his seat, and the sentence of imprisonment and fine pronounced against him in 1764 was carried out. He became at once the representative of the radicals, and “45” or “Wilkes and Liberty” developed into battle cries so potent that the administration was obliged to stay its hand (cf. *Hyp.* 47). Later Wilkes was elected alderman of London, sheriff for London and Middlesex, and Lord Mayor of London. Boswell spent considerable time with him in Italy during his exile, and remained his jovial correspondent and friend. See Bleackley, *Life of John Wilkes*, and *Letters of B.*, Index.

coats, should be made to go on a lace, so as to be taken off and on at pleasure. In that way, by having a sufficient stock of buttons with different numbers, their designations might be varied as fast as their sentiments and connections.

I claim great merit from the invention of this general numbering, and therefore I hope you will give it a place in your paper, that if I meet with no other reward, I may at least have the pleasure to receive a little praise."

No. L. Nov. 1781.

## [ON LEARNING]

*Subagreste ingenium nullis vetustatis lectionibus expolitum.*—AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS.<sup>1</sup>

“A rustick genius not refined by any ancient learning.”

AMONGST the paradoxes which ingenious vanity has attempted to maintain, there is none that has been better received by the multitude than the inutility, nay, the hurtfulness of Learning. For as the greatest number of mankind are destitute of learning, it is soothing to them to be told, that they need not repine at their own inferiority, or rather indeed, to go directly to the cause of fretfulness—the superiority of others.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his *Rerum Gestarum Libri*.

<sup>2</sup> A criticism of himself as well as of the “multitude”; Boswell was acutely conscious of his deficiencies in learning (see *Letters of B.*, 1. 101, 214, 224, 226, 239, 245; 2. 297, 301, 304, 309, 380; and *Life of J.*, 1. 475; 3. 463), and his “fretfulness” at the superiority of others shows itself from time to time in his attempts to argue that learning is perhaps unnecessary. For instance, when Johnson (*Life of J.*, 2. 413) “combats the idle superficial notion that knowledge enough may be acquired in conversation,” he is undoubtedly answering a suggestion of Boswell; so likewise the conversation (*ibid.*, 1. 529–30) started by Boswell’s asking him “if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education.”

In this essay, however, Boswell presents the point of view to which he brought himself in a letter to Temple in 1780—“I begin to think that true elevation is to be acquired from study and thinking.” Certain passages in the letter are closely parallel to various parts of the essay (*Letters of B.*, 2. 304 ff.):

Often do I upbraid and look down upon myself when, in contemplation of the heights of learning to which one may attain, I view my own inferiority, and think how much many others and, amongst them, you, Temple, are above me. Yet, on the other hand, when I consider what vexations you suffer from which I am free, I am inclined to quiet myself. “Much study is a weariness to the flesh,” says the Wise Man. Now if there is upon the whole more pain than pleasure in advancing far into literature, would you advise one to do it? . . . .

[The letter is resumed next day.]

Drowsiness . . . . hung heavy upon me last night, when I was willing to suppose more pain than pleasure in advancing far into literature. Men of delicate nerves may at times suffer from their knowledge. But they would suffer by something else, and even their enjoyments from knowledge counterbalance [*sic*] their sufferings. And it is to be hoped that a period is coming when they will have a more full relish of their intellectual acquisitions. And men of sound and vigorous minds have high satisfaction in their knowledge. Dr. Johnson maintains that a man is truly happy in proportion to his knowledge. I myself, who know so little, can judge from experience of the pleasure of knowledge from what I do know. What must be the pleasure of some men whose enlarged minds and retentive memories possess large extensive funds of various knowledge provided they have vivacity enough to enjoy it?

But as truth should be invariably supported by a *philosopher*, which I profess myself to be in the modest original signification of the word, *a lover of wisdom*,<sup>3</sup> and the levelling system is not less injurious to excellence of mind, than to external good order, it shall be the purpose of this essay to bring together some reflections in opposition to so baneful a reverie.

We find in some of the poets several starts of fancy against Learning, as if it only served to disturb understandings, and sicken our imaginations. But we are sure that these poets themselves were not in reality of an opinion so wild and dispiriting to animated exertion. For they studied with assiduity, and shewed in other parts of their writings how much they had derived from books. I speak not of ignorant rhymers, who could compose an ordinary ballad or drinking song, but of such as truly deserved the name of poets from the matter and style of their compositions.

There are, I allow, distinctions to be made in considering this subject. A man of a weak mind may be overloaded with learning, so that his faculties which might have served him very well, if left to their natural play, are buried in what Pope well expresses by “*learned lumber*;”<sup>4</sup> for lumber it certainly must be, when not sustained by an intellect sufficiently vigorous. This, however, is not inconsistent with the same great poet’s maxim, that “A little learning is a dangerous thing.” For, to “drink deep of the Pierian spring,” or know a subject much, or well, instead of having a confused notion of it, is what Pope means in opposition to a little learning, and what I mean in opposition to being overloaded with learning, since no man is overloaded with that which he can carry

<sup>3</sup> Boswell is taking care to distinguish himself from Deists and sentimental materialists, the popular philosophers whose “pernicious ravings” so distressed—and attracted—him. Cf. *Hyp.* 7, 11, 12, 20, 22, for censure of them. See also *Life of J.*, Index, under Bolingbroke, Dempster, Hume, Priestley, Rousseau, etc. One of Boswell’s firmest and earliest reasons for loving Johnson was the lexicographer’s ability to vanquish sophistry by “solid sense and vigorous reasoning” (*Letters of B.*, 1. 27, 29).

<sup>4</sup> The notion here presented was evidently a standing excuse with Boswell for his lack of learning. See *Life of J.*, 3. 460, and *Hyp.* 4; in that early essay Boswell uses the same quotation from Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (613) that he uses here, and very nearly the same terms to express his thought.

The following quotations from Pope are also from the *Essay on Criticism*, 215, 216.

with ease. Nor is the species of learning to be reckoned of no consequence; since we know that the absurdity of many laborious men hath filled immense volumes with what cannot be understood, and is absolutely useless. This is doubtless “learned lumber;” and if by Learning we are to understand such a stock for the memory, I should agree that the paradox which I wish to refute, is a true and very judicious observation. I will go farther; for I cannot help thinking that a great deal of the metaphysical speculation, which has employed the ablest heads, is not only of no service to the world, but absolutely pernicious; so that as to this I would adopt two lines of a gentleman whom I esteem as a genuine poetical genius, Mr. Hamilton, of Bangour:

“Lean study, sire of sallow doubt,  
“I put thy musing taper out.”<sup>5</sup>

But surely good Learning is a valuable acquisition, and ancient Learning, as it has come down to us through such a long succession of ages, must make us wiser, and better, and happier. The dross has been left behind, and only what is pure and precious has been preserved till now. It is a favourite mode with many in this age,

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<sup>5</sup> William Hamilton of Bangour (1704–1754), Jacobite poet, was one of the authors upon whom Boswell and Johnson did not agree. Boswell mentions him with pleasure in *Hebr.*, 48, and in the *Life of J.*, 3. 170, gives an account of a struggle to make Johnson appreciate him:

In the afternoon I tried to get Dr. Johnson to like the Poems of Mr. Hamilton of Bangour, which I had brought with me: I had been much pleased with them at a very early age; the impression still remained on my mind; it was confirmed by the opinion of my friend the Honourable Andrew Erskine, himself both a good poet and a good critick, who thought Hamilton as true a poet as ever wrote, and that his not having fame was unaccountable. Johnson, upon repeated occasions . . . . talked slightly of Hamilton. He said there was no power of thinking in his verses, nothing that strikes one, nothing better than what you generally find in magazines; and that the highest praise they deserved was, that they were very well for a gentleman to hand about among his friends. He said the imitation of *Ne sit ancillæ tibi amor, &c.* was too solemn. . . . He read the beautiful pathetick song, *At the poor shepherd's mournful fate*, and did not seem to give attention to what I had been used to think tender elegant strains, but laughed at the rhyme, in Scotch pronunciation, *wishes* and *blushes*, reading *wushes*—and there he stopped. . . . When I urged that there were some good poetical passages in the book, “Where (said he,) will you find so large collection without some?” . . . I was struck with the uncertainty of taste, and somewhat sorry that a poet whom I had long read with fondness, was not approved by Dr. Johnson. I comforted myself with thinking that the beauties were too delicate for his robust perceptions.

Hamilton is remembered now only by his *Braes of Yarrow*. The Ode quoted in this essay is his second, beginning *Begone, pursuits so vain and light*. Boswell's judgment of Hamilton may have been influenced by the fact that he was acquainted with the poet's son (*Boswelliana*, 270 ff.).

to separate Knowledge from Learning, and to hold, that we may have all the substance of ancient attainments by means of translation, without understanding the languages in which they are contained.<sup>6</sup> But although I am not able clearly to explain it, I am fully convinced, and every man who has a relish of Greek and Latin, or of one of them, will agree with me, that the science must be very dry indeed which can be equally well communicated to the mind through the medium of translation, as by the direct expression of its author. This is true, even as to literary compositions, in modern languages, but has much greater force when applied to those writings which were finished with the utmost care and nicety, in times when Language was in a far higher state of perfection.

I was lately reading at a more mature period of my life, Cicero's oration *Pro Archia Poeta*, which is one of that distinguished orator's most elegant compositions, and contains the finest recommendation of *literæ humaniores*, or what we call classical learning. There is the celebrated passage which has been quoted a thousand times, and cannot be quoted too often: “*Hæc studia adolescentiam agunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium prebent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur—* These studies employ our youth, soothe our old age, adorn

<sup>6</sup> Boswell is perhaps reflecting upon Johnson's criticism of Scottish education in his *Journey to the Western Islands*:

Men bred in the Universities of Scotland cannot be expected to be often decorated with the splendours of ornamental erudition, but they obtain a mediocrity of knowledge between learning and ignorance, not inadequate to the purposes of common life, which is, I believe, very widely diffused among them.

Johnson defended his opinion in a conversation of 1775 (*Life of J.*, 2. 416). Contrast to the statements in this essay, the praise given to modern variety of information at the expense of decayed learning, in *Hyp.* 52.

It is possible that Boswell is writing this essay from his notes of a conversation of 1776, in which translation and the general diffusion of knowledge, were major topics; the remarks on translation are comparable to the expressions here used (*Life of J.*, 3. 42):

We talked of translation. I said, I could not define it, nor could I think of a similitude to illustrate it; but that it appeared to me the translation of poetry could be only imitation. JOHNSON. “You may translate books of science exactly. You may also translate history, in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language, if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language.”

prosperity, afford a refuge and comfort in adversity, delight us at home, do not hinder us when abroad, are with us in the night, travel with us, go to the country with us."

Addison, who was himself an instance of a scholar raised on that account to a high employment in the state, maintains in one of his papers in the Spectator, that men of Learning are most fit for important business. Unluckily the doctrine did not hold in his case.<sup>7</sup> But that was not owing to his Learning, but to an uncommon anxiety for correctness, which constantly possessed him, insomuch, that we are told by Mr. Joseph Warton, in his entertaining Essay on the Life and Writings of Mr. Pope, that Addison would correct his proof sheets again and again, and reprint a leaf for the alteration of a single word. In general, the doctrine is just; for, as Cicero observes in the same oration, "*Omnes artes quæ ad humanitatem pertinent habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione quadam inter se continentur*—All human arts have a certain common bond of union, and are contained, as it were by a certain relation one to another."

He shews the truth of this proposition still more clearly, as follows: "*An tu existimas, aut suppetere nobis posse quod quotidie dicamus in tanta varietate rerum nisi animos nostros doctrina excolamus, aut ferre animos tantum posse contentionem nisi eos doctrina eadem relaxemus*—Think you that we could be supplied

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<sup>7</sup> *The Spectator*, 469. Johnson reveals Addison's unfitness for business in unmeasured terms (*Life of Addison*):

When the House of Hanover took possession of the throne, it was reasonable to expect that the zeal of Addison would be suitably rewarded. Before the arrival of King George, he was made secretary to the regency, and was required by his office to send notice to Hanover that the Queen was dead, and that the throne was vacant. To do this would not have been difficult to any man but Addison, who was so overwhelmed with the greatness of the event, and so distracted by choice of expression, that the lords, who could not wait for the niceties of criticism, called Mr. Southwell, a clerk in the house, and ordered him to dispatch the message. Southwell readily told what was necessary in the common style of business, and valued himself upon having done what was too hard for Addison. . . . [In 1717] he rose to his highest elevation, being made secretary of state. For this employment he might be justly supposed qualified by long practice of business, and by his regular ascent through other offices; but expectation is often disappointed; it is universally confessed that he was unequal to the duties of his place. In the house of commons he could not speak, and therefore was useless to the defence of the government. In the office, says Pope, he could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions. What he gained in rank, he lost in credit; and, finding by experience his own inability, was forced to solicit his dismissal, with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends palliated this relinquishment, of which both friends and enemies knew the true reason, with an account of declining health, and the necessity of recess and quiet.

with what we daily speak in so great a variety of affairs, if we did not cultivate our minds with Learning, and could our minds bear such struggles if we did not relax them with that Learning?"

He is candid enough to admit, that he has known many men blessed with good parts and dispositions make an excellent figure without Learning; nay, that he has oftener seen natural advantages do well without learning, than Learning without natural advantages. But *then* he tells us, that when to distinguished natural advantages, Learning has been added, a character very high indeed, and what he dignifies as *divine*, has arisen, of which he gives us several examples.

The character expressed in my motto by "subagreste ingenium"—a rustic genius," was in the view of Cicero. For in the same oration he speaks of being "Animo agresti, ac duro—of a rustic and hard mind," which a man of very good coarse sense may be, like *Ocellus*, mentioned by *Horace*, as *Rusticus abnormis sapiens*, which I would thus put into English, "a rough, sensible countryman."<sup>8</sup> But that character though of good esteem is certainly inferior to a man of sense, refined or polished by ancient learning. The undisputed preference of ancient composition is acknowledged even by Cicero, in this oration, who after celebrating the quickness of Archias, whom he had heard utter *extempore*, "magnum numerum optimorum versuum—a great number of *very good* verses," adds, that when he composed accurately and deliberately they were of such merit "ut ad veterum scriptorum laudem pervenirent; that they attained to the praise of *ancient* writers." Indeed I inherit a respect for the ancient writers, having heard my father, a very steady reader of the Greek and Roman authors, recommend as the best plan of study, to *read chronologically* so as not to give one's time to the moderns till after having finished the ancients.<sup>9</sup>

To an *Hypochondriack*, Learning is exceedingly advantageous. Should it be considered only as affording pleasure like what is<sup>10</sup> had from playing on a musical instrument, it is well worth his while to acquire it as much as he can in the clear seasons of his existence.

<sup>8</sup> *Sat.*, 2. 2. 3. Properly, *Ocellus*; see *Hyp.* 37, where also it is *Ocellus*, uncorrected. The quotation is used as motto for *The Spectator*, 109.

<sup>9</sup> For Boswell's various attitudes toward systematic study, cf. *Hyp.* 46 n. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Originally printed *it*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

But we know that it affords salutary food to his faculties, and prevents them from raging ravenously abroad, or secretly gnawing and preying upon the soul itself, and that it gradually strengthens and gives a firm tone to the mind.<sup>11</sup> Let not, therefore, an Hypochondriack resign himself to idleness; though by reason of a temporary mist, Learning should have a false and distorted appearance to him, and though he should not then be able to perceive any good that it has done to him, Learning is in some cases to the mind, like manure to the earth. It enriches it while its own distinct existence is concealed, or eludes observation.

In my paper upon *Excess*, I have treated that subject so fully, that I need not caution my readers particularly against an excess of study, which is not only “a weariness to the flesh”<sup>12</sup> but exhausts and depresses the mind. When I recommend Learning, I am to be understood as having a due regard to different constitutions and tempers, to which different proportions of study are suitable; and as to these, every one must conduct himself according to his own particular case.

It must not, however, be expected, that Learning will secure us against unhappiness in this life; men of Learning are not a distinct race of beings, more than men of wealth, or of any other good distinguishing quality. There is indeed too general a propensity to look upon them as a peculiar tribe. I have no objection to all

<sup>11</sup> Johnson admitted that he had fled from studies to the excitement of social life as a cure for melancholy (*Life of J.*, 1. 517), but he advised Boswell to turn to books. “I am to read more and drink less. That was his counsel,” Boswell tells Temple (*Letters of B.*, 1. 226). The same advice is given in the *Life of J.*, 3. 6:

“If I were in the country, and were distressed by that malady, I would force myself to take a book; and every time I did it I should find it the easier.”

In another conversation on hypochondria, Johnson advised Boswell to “have as many books about him as he could; that he might read upon any subject upon which he had a desire for instruction at the time” (*ibid.*, 3. 219).

See also *Rasselas*, chap. 11:

Knowledge is certainly one of the means of pleasure, as is confessed by the natural desire which every mind feels of increasing its ideas. Ignorance is mere privation . . . ; it is a vacuity in which the soul sits motionless and torpid for want of attraction . . . I am therefore inclined to conclude, that if nothing counteracts the natural consequence of learning, we grow more happy as our minds take wider range.

<sup>12</sup> *Eccles.*, 12. 12—properly, “of the flesh.” The quotation is made in this connection in the letter to Temple given in note 2 above, with the same slight error.

respect being paid them, and, to the honour of France, I understand that it is the only country in the world where Literature is an *état*, a rank in society. Learned men are subject to all the evils that “flesh,” in general, “is heir to.”<sup>13</sup> But, on the other hand, they are not in a worse condition than other men, though, *Joannes Pierius Valerianus* in his treatise *De Literatorum infelicitate*, has collected no less than one hundred and eight instances of unfortunate *Literati*; and *Cornelius Tollius*, in an appendix to it, has added fifty three. The former draws this sad conclusion: “Ærumnosissimum rerum omnium arbitror sane literas—I truly think learning the most wretched of all things.” But the truth is, he shews no peculiar infelicity connected with Learning, but enumerates disasters which might have happened to the different persons, whether learned, or not, or which were occasioned not by their Learning, but by their offending against the establishments under which they lived.<sup>14</sup> For the comfort of the studious, I can with pleasure mention, that I have seen a table of longevity, lately drawn up by a curious gentleman, consisting of three columns, one of kings, one of poets, and one of philosophers; and it appears, that the poets lived many years more than the kings; but the philosophers whose application must be allowed to be the greatest, lived many years more than either the poets or the kings.

<sup>13</sup> *Hamlet*, 3. i. 64. Quotations from this soliloquy occur again in *Hyp.* 22, 51, 63.

<sup>14</sup> This curious work had a long history. The author, whose true name was John Peter Bolzani (1477–1558), knew whereof he spoke, since much of his life was spent in dependence or servitude for the sake of learning; he could not read until he was fifteen years of age. He became a protégé of Cardinal Bembo, Leo X, and Clement VII, and upon the death of his last patron, a Medicean cardinal, he retired to Padua. His works are largely poetic and antiquarian. What Boswell quotes is his ninth book, *Contarenus, sive de litteratorum infelicitate* (1620); the title is derived from the first section, a dialogue between the Venetian ambassador Contarino, and various scholars of Rome.

Cornelius Tollius (1620–1662?), pupil and secretary to the great Gerardus Vossius, brought out his edition of Bolzani’s work in 1647 at Amsterdam; his additions dealt with the lives of French and Italian writers. Another edition was published at Helmstadt in 1695. In 1707, an edition printed at Leipzig included two more analogous works (*De exilio* and *De miseria poetarum graecorum*) with a preface by Johann Mencke (for whom see *Hyp.* 21 n. 16). The latest edition of the *Contarenus* was issued by Sir Egerton Brydges at Geneva in 1821.

No. LI. Dec. 1781.

## [ON SUICIDE]

*Neque enim frustra in sanctis canonicis libris nusquam nobis divinitus præceptum permisumve reperiri potest, ut vel ipsius adipiscendæ immortalitatis, vel ullius carenti cavendive mali causa, nobis metipsis necem inferamus.—SANCT. AUGUSTIN. De Civit. DEI.*

“For, it is not without a meaning that we can no where in the holy canonical books, find it commanded or permitted, that either to attain even immortality, or to free ourselves from, or guard against any evil, we should kill ourselves.”

**Z**EAL for moral rectitude and for the dignity of virtue, however laudable and generous, hath in my opinion gone too far in several of its assumptions. In particular, I am convinced that desireable as it may be to have an universal standard of right and wrong, mankind have not been favoured with it. Not only is there no such universal standard conspicuous alike to the learned and to the ignorant, as is the sun in the firmament; but it cannot even be discovered with equal clearness by the studious, in the same way as truths in mathematicks or natural philosophy are discovered.

But while I express my opinion, that there is not an universal standard of right and wrong, I at the same time agree with those writers who have maintained that a regard for what is thought right in human conduct, and a disapprobation of what is thought wrong, though erroneous in many instances of application, may be traced in every nation; and that some of the great points of duty are very generally displayed; so that I can quote that admirable passage in the prophet Micah: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” And such of the human race as have the benefit of a revelation by that Divine Person, who “spoke as never man spoke,” have these grand articles illustrated in a superior manner. For example, how comprehensive, and fair, and amiable is that precept, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.”<sup>1</sup>

As one striking proof of the position with which I set out, I shall instance the difference of opinion which has been entertained,

<sup>1</sup> The biblical quotations are *Micah*, 6. 8; *John*, 7. 46; *Mtth.*, 7. 12.

as to the right which a man has to put an end to his existence in this life. Amongst the ancients in general, it was not disputed. The Athenians indeed held suicide to be a crime; and as a mark of infamy punished it on the dead body of the perpetrator by cutting off the hand with which the deed was done. But the Romans, so far from thinking in the same manner, looked upon suicide as one of the noblest exertions of virtue, if there was a proper cause for it, such as avoiding disgrace, or being included in subjection to what a man deemed lawless power, or tyranny.<sup>2</sup> In Virgil's picture of the infernal regions we find, amongst the unhappy wanderers, those who "projecere animas—threw away their lives," that is to say, who killed themselves from frivolous motives, while those who fell magnanimously by their own hands, as Cato was thought to do, enjoy distinguished honours.<sup>3</sup> This is a distinction of *spirit*

<sup>2</sup> See Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, 2. 248, quoting Aeschines, *In Ctesiphontem*, 244, and Justinian's *Digesta*, 48. 21 and 49. 16. The Athenians not only cut off the hand of the suicide but buried it apart from the body, evidently to prevent any further mischief by the malicious spirit. Roman law ignored the deed as outside the interests of the state *except in two cases*: the suicide of soldiers was a crime, and the suicide of accused persons was assumed to be a confession of guilt, thus entailing the same consequences as to property and so on, that condemnation would have done.

<sup>3</sup> *Aeneid*, 6. 434 ff., 8. 670.

The contrast between noble Roman and ignoble English suicide was frequently made by English moralists of the eighteenth century, but nowhere more forcibly than in Brown's *Estimate of the Manners and the Principles of the Times* (1757), 1. 90 ff.:

There is another Circumstance in modern Manners, the Consideration of which must not be omitted because at first view it bids fair for the Spirit of Defence among the *Great*: I mean, the Spirit of *deliberate Self-Murder*: for this ran high in ancient GREECE and ROME, when the Spirit of *Defence* was strong.

For the clearing of this Point, it must be premised and confessed, that something like the Principle of Honour, that is, the *Dread of Infamy* and *Shame*, appears the leading Motive in both Instances. But a farther Distinction is to be made, with Regard to the different Objects of this Fear; . . . we have seen, that the ruling *Pride* of a modern Man of Fashion, lies in the Parade of *Dress*, *Gaming*, *Entertainments*, and *Equipage*; whereas, on the contrary, the *Ambition* of an old *Roman*, was, to excel in *military Virtue*. . . . The *Roman* killed himself, because he had been unfortunate in *War*; the *Englishman*, because he hath been unfortunate at *Whist*; the *old Hero*, because he had *disgraced his Country*; the *modern*, because he dares not shew his Head at *Arthur's*: That, because he was deprived of his *Glory*; this of his *Ortolans* and *Champagne*; The first was encouraged by a *mistaken Principle of Religion*; the latter, by his being *void of all Religion*: The one, because he had *lost a Battle or a Province*; the other, because the *Bailiff* hath seized his *Equipage*: the *Roman* was impelled to *Self-Destruction* by the Strength of *warlike Honour*; the *Briton*, by *despicable and effeminate Vanity*.

An anonymous writer, in a pamphlet entitled *The Deists Creed and Confes-*

or of *sentiment*, not a *moral* distinction; and therefore we find in the Roman law, as digested at a much later period by Justinian, that no blame was to be imputed to a man who chose to die from whatever reason.

Considering this subject in the law of nature alone, it is by no means clear that Suicide is criminal. For the common argument against it, from the obligation of acquiescence in the situation in which we are placed by Providence, may be as well urged against every other endeavour to change for the better; to attain good or avoid evil; as is elegantly reasoned by *Rousseau* in the character of *St. Preux*, in his *Nouvelle Héloïse*.<sup>4</sup> Nay, we have in our own language a very curious treatise by the celebrated *Dr. Donne*, entitled “ΒΙΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ—A Declaration of that Paradox or Thesis, that Self-homicide is not so naturally Sin that it may never be otherwise.” *Dr. Donne* has collected a great deal of learning in that treatise, in support of the thesis, but we know that it had no bad effect upon his own mind. For he afterwards discharged the office of Dean of St. Paul’s in a most conscientious and exemplary manner. And whoever reads the excellent account of his life and death by *Isaac Walton*, will, if disposed for genuine piety, be truly edified.<sup>5</sup>

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*sion, in a Dialogue between the Gallows and a Freethinker* (1733), attributes English suicide to the fashionable rationalism:

*Gallows*: . . . . Perhaps [the Freethinker] may laugh at all Remonstrances, as long as his Passions are in their full Career; but when these come to flag, and Death stares him in the Face, I can never think all is so easy *Within* as they would make us believe; otherwise, Why are they forc'd to put a stop to all Remorse by a Shot, or a Stab, or a Dose of Opium; but because they can't bear the Terror of their own Thoughts? . . . . What is the Reason so many Deists and Freethinkers lay violent Hands on themselves, when their Conscience begins to prick them? . . . . We see all other Creatures struggle to the last Gasp to save the remainder of their Lives; nay, the most determin'd Atheist, who by his false Reasonings had resolv'd to kill himself, if we should offer to stab him at unawares, would stand upon his Guard: So great is the Force of Nature.

<sup>4</sup> Part 3, letter 21. This and the answering letter from Lord Edward Boscawen form the background for much of his essay by Boswell, although he gives credit to Rousseau for one or two points only. In his general argument, St. Preux cites the suicide of the Romans and the lack of prohibition against the deed in Scripture, and Boscawen emphasizes in his refutation the moral obligation of life and the foolishness of killing one's self in a mood which will certainly be replaced by another feeling under other circumstances; these are Boswell's main points also. See parallels below.

<sup>5</sup> Walton's *Life of Dr. John Donne*, written as introduction to a volume of Donne's sermons, was published in 1640. Dr. Johnson considered it the most

It is remarkable, that in the law delivered by divine legation to the Jews, though it be abundantly full and minute in specifying crimes and circumstances of prohibition, there is no mention of Suicide; but in the Jewish history, as recorded in the Old Testament, we find that Saul, their unfortunate king, fell upon his sword in Mount Gilboa; nor is it mentioned as a thing strange or shocking. Saul is the *first self-slayer* of whom we read, which I more particularly notice because he is also the *first Hypochondriack*. “An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him, and when David played on the harp he was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”<sup>6</sup>

It is still more remarkable, that in the New Testament there is nothing said as to Suicide. *Rousseau* avails himself very plausibly of this silence,<sup>7</sup> and indeed we are left to reasonings

perfect of Walton’s *Lives* (*Life of J.*, 2. 417). Donne’s work on suicide was written *ca.* 1610, but was not published until 1644, long after his death (1631). He had himself often had “such a sickly inclination.” In 1621 he was made Dean of St. Paul’s where, in spite of failing health, he was able to command attention by his profoundly sincere and moving sermons.

<sup>6</sup> This is Rousseau’s point; Boswell merely gives an original illustration from *1 Sam.*, 31. 4 and 16. 14. Cf. *Nouv. Hél.*, 3. 21:

En effet, où verra-t-on dans la Bible entière une loi contre le suicide, ou même une simple improbation? et n'est-il pas bien étrange que dans les exemples de gens qui se sont donné la mort, on n'y trouve pas un seul mot de blâme contre aucun de ces exemples!

Rousseau proceeds with the example of Samson and reference to the severe discipline of Moses.

<sup>7</sup> The passages in the letter of St. Preux upon the New Testament precede and follow the allusion to the Old Testament given in n. 6 above:

... quelles maximes plus certaines la raison peut-elle déduire de la religion sur la mort volontaire? Si les chrétiens en ont établi d’opposées, ils ne les ont tirés ni des principes de leur religion, ni de sa règle unique, qui est l’Écriture, mais seulement des philosophes païens. Laftance et Augustin, qui les premiers avancèrent cette nouvelle doctrine, dont Jésus-Christ ni les apôtres n’avoient pas dit un mot, ne s’appuyèrent que sur le raisonnement du Phédon, que j’ai déjà combattu; de sorte que les fidèles, qui croient suivre en cela l’autorité de l’Évangile, ne suivent que celle de Platon. ...

Mais, disent-ils encore, souffrez patiemment les maux que Dieu vous envoie; faites-vous un mérite de vos peines. Appliquer ainsi les maximes du christianisme, que c'est mal en saisir l'esprit! L'homme est sujet à mille maux, sa vie est un tissu de misères, et il ne semble naître que pour souffrir. De ces maux, ceux qu'il peut éviter, la raison veut qu'il les évite; et la religion, qui n'est jamais contraire à la raison, l'approuve. Mais que leur somme est petite auprès de ceux qu'il est forcé de souffrir malgré lui! C'est de ceux-ci qu'un Dieu clément permet aux hommes de se faire un mérite; il accepte en hommage volontaire le tribut forcé qu'il nous impose, et marque au profit de l'autre vie la résignation dans celle-ci. La véritable pénitence de l'homme lui est imposée par la nature: s'il endure patiemment tout ce qu'il est contraint d'endurer, il a fait à cet égard tout ce que Dieu lui demande; et si quelqu'un montre assez d'orgueil pour vouloir faire davantage c'est un fou qu'il faut enfermer, ou un fourbe

concerning it which are sufficiently strong, from the general strain of recommending patience under sufferings, and a constant submission to the will of God. That there is no direct or positive precept against it must be allowed; and so it will be observed that *St. Augustin* founds his opinion upon there being neither command nor permission for it. *Shakespeare*, in that gloomy soliloquy of Hamlet—"Oh! that this too, too solid flesh would melt," takes it for granted, that "the Everlasting has fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter." But though as I have observed, we may by induction discover Self-slaughter to be an offence against the Majesty of Heaven, there is no *canon* to that purpose. The law of England proceeds upon the supposition that Suicide is an impious crime, and punishes it, not only as the Athenians did in the dead body of the criminal, by ordering it to be buried in the highway with a stake driven through it; but also in his posterity by the confiscation of his estate.<sup>8</sup>

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qu'il faut punir. Fuyons donc sans scrupule tous les maux que nous pouvons fuir, il ne nous en restera que trop à souffrir encore. Délivrons-nous sans remords de la vie même, aussitôt qu'elle est un mal pour nous, puisqu'il dépend de nous de le faire, et qu'en cela nous n'offensons ni Dieu, ni les hommes. S'il faut un sacrifice à l'Être suprême, n'est-ce rien que de mourir? Offrons à Dieu la mort qu'il nous impose par la voix de la raison, et versons paisiblement dans son sein notre âme qu'il redemande.

It is to be observed that—as if he were writing with the French text in hand—Boswell spells *Augustine* without the final *e*, in his ensuing sentence.

<sup>8</sup> The stake-and-crossroads burial of persons *felo de se* was not prescribed by legislation, but by popular custom, probably fostered by the church. So great was the sympathy of the public for persons to be buried in this barbarous fashion that it was a common occurrence for the coroner's jury to give the verdict of natural death or insanity rather than deliberate *felo de se*—in which case the deceased might be buried in a decent manner. However, the custom continued well into the nineteenth century, producing such horrors as this, reported in the *Annual Register* for 1812 (54. 5):

.... on reaching the spot where the New-road crosses, and the Cannon-street road begins, a large hole being prepared, the cart stopped. After a pause of about ten minutes, the body was thrown into its infamous grave, amidst the declamations of thousands of spectators. The stake which the law requires to be driven through the corpse had been placed in the procession, under the head of Williams, by way of pillow: and after he was consigned to the earth, it was handed down from the platform, and with the mall was driven through the body. The grave was then filled with quick lime, and the spectators very quietly dispersed.

It was not until 1823 that the practice was discontinued, by a law (4 George IV c. 52) which was reported with a certain amount of historical background in the *Annual Register* (65. 88):

The mode of interment, which a long continued custom had caused (though unsupported by express authority) to be regarded as law, was in many respects revolting to every natural

But still it appears to me that people of humane and liberal minds cannot feel the same indignation against one who has committed Suicide, than we feel against a robber, a murderer, or, in short, one who has daringly counteracted a clear and positive commandment. For man “Born but to die, and reas’ning but to err,”<sup>9</sup> is liable to mistake, in a matter that is to be learned from a complex consideration of different texts. And unless in cases of wild, cheerful enthusiasm, such as are supposed in my motto, when the motive to Suicide is hastening into immortality, they who do such violence to the strong principle of self-preservation, and are “at variance with themselves,” as *Milton* expresses it in his *Samson Agonistes*, have generally their faculties clouded with melancholy, and distracted by misery.

One of the finest odes in the English language is “*The Suicide*,” by *Mr. Thomas Warton*. The dismal workings of the unhappy person’s mind, and all the popular ideas of horrour attending Self-destruction are great materials for solemn and pathetick poetry, and *Mr. Warton* has made a masterly use of them. The moral too is highly given:

“In aweful expectation plac’d,  
Await thy doom, nor impious haste,  
To pluck from God’s right hand his instruments of death.”

I must approve of associating deep abhorrence with Suicide, and therefore, with all deference for *Addison*, I fairly avow, that

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feeling. To remove this stain from our national usages, a law was passed, which enacted that, for the future, it should not be lawful for any coroner . . . . to issue any warrant . . . . directing the remains of persons against whom a finding of *felo de se* should have been had, to be interred in any public highway; but that such coroner . . . . should give directions for the private interment of the remains of such person *felo de se* (without any stake being driven through the body of such person) in the church-yard or other burial ground of the parish or place in which the remains of such person might, by the laws and customs of England, be interred, if the verdict of *felo de se* had not been found against him; such interment to be made within twenty-four hours from the finding of the inquisition, and to take place between the hours of nine and twelve at night.—The act, however, gave no authority for performing any of the rights [sic] of Christian burial on such interment. . . .

For instances in point, see *Ann. Reg.*, 40. 57, 72; 42. 29; 54. 5, 28, 143; 59. 4, 73; 60. 156; 61. 3. The confiscation of property was the legal consequence, not of suicide alone, but of any felony, up to 1870, and the property forfeit to the crown after the verdict of *felo de se* was goods and chattels only—not land. The Forfeiture Act of 1870 abolished confiscation except in outlawry.

<sup>9</sup> Pope, *Essay on Man*, 2. 10.

I cannot excuse his exhibiting *Cato* a Self-murderer as the hero of a tragedy full of exalted sentiments, especially when the example of his hero is recommended in the prologue in the numbers of *Pope*, holding in some degree the place of the ancient chorus, whose business it was to inculcate the moral.

“Who sees him act but envies ev’ry deed,  
“Who hears him groan and would not wish to bleed?”<sup>10</sup>

That cases can be figured, in which Suicide, as the least of two evils, may be preferred, I shall not deny. But casuistry is a dangerous thing, and I do not wish to enter upon it. Certain it is that by far the greatest number of those who have “jumped the life to come,”<sup>11</sup> have acted rashly and foolishly. This is particularly true of *Hypochondriacks*, who in a fit of wretched impatience have rushed into eternity to escape from a “load of life,”<sup>12</sup> which would soon have become light. To do justice to *Rousseau*, he eloquently dissuades from such fatal precipitancy on account of uneasiness of mind: “*La tristesse, l’ennui, les regrets, les desespoirs sont des douleurs peu durables qui ne s’enracinent jamais dans l’âme; et l’expérience dément toujours ce sentiment d’amertume qui nous fait regarder nos peines comme éternelles.*”—Sadness, languor, regret, and despair, are woes which do not last long, and never take root in the soul; and experience always corrects the bitter sentiment which makes us imagine that our misery is to be without end.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Boswell quotes from memory; the second line should run, “and does not wish to bleed?”

<sup>11</sup> *Macbeth*, I. 7. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Thomson, *Castle of Indolence*, I. 12. 1.

<sup>13</sup> The quotation shows Boswell’s usual indifference in regard to French accents. From Bomston’s answer to St. Preux, *Nouv. Hél.*, 3. 22. Boswell’s preceding and following paragraphs bear close resemblance to the same part of Rousseau’s work, however, without credit to the source:

Toi qui crois Dieu existant, l’âme immortelle, et la liberté de l’homme, tu ne penses pas, sans doute, qu’un être intelligent reçoive un corps et soit placé sur la terre au hasard seulement pour vivre, souffrir et mourir? il y a bien peut-être à la vie humaine un but, une fin, un objet moral? . . . Mais laissons les maximes générales, dont on fait souvent beaucoup de bruit sans jamais en suivre aucune; car il se trouve toujours dans l’application quelque condition particulière qui change tellement l’état des choses, que chacun se croit dispensé d’obéir à la règle qu’il prescrit aux autres; et l’on sait bien que tout homme qui pose des maximes générales entend qu’elles obligent tout le monde, excepté lui. . . .

Tu t’ennuies de vivre, et tu dis: La vie est un mal. Tôt ou tard tu seras consolé, et tu diras: La vie est un bien. Tu diras plus vrai sans mieux raisonner; car rien n’aura changé que toi.

Every melancholy man who has groaned under the temptation to destroy himself, has afterwards had such enjoyments as to make him fully sensible that he would have acted very absurdly, had he cut himself off from this “pleasing anxious being,”<sup>14</sup> from a persuasion that all that remained of it would be sadness. Melancholy does not leave even the slightest scar; and a man after suffering grievously from it, is perfectly sound and happy. Wisdom therefore suggests patience, and in this case peculiarly “patience worketh experience, and experience hope.”<sup>15</sup> It is related somewhere that an ancient philosopher claimed so feelingly on the misery of human life, that all his disciples went directly from his school and killed themselves. But we do not read that the philosopher did so. He was too wise.<sup>16</sup>

Pride being a chief ingredient in the composition of *Hypochondria*, a good use may be made of it to counteract so desperate an effect of its other qualities as a wish for Self-destruction. Let the Hypochondriack consider, that if he should be *felo de se*, he will be exposed to the mean and insolent triumph and scorn of creatures whom he despises, but who will then have the world along with them.

But if we take a more aweful view of the subject, with reference to the Supreme Judge and to a future state, we must surely startle. Hamlet’s soliloquy

“To be, or not to be, that is the question?”

is a capital piece of philosophical reasoning, which every body recollects, and which cannot be answered unless one had an undoubted intimation from the world of spirits. And there is a fine passage not so well known, which has long struck me as a just and alarming view of Suicide; it is in a scene between Phocyas and Eudocia, in *Hughes’s Siege of Damascus*, a tragedy.<sup>17</sup> Phocyas shews a dagger, and is about to kill himself.

<sup>14</sup> Gray’s *Elegy*. See other references to it in *Hyp.* 21, 22, 23 n. 11, 61.

<sup>15</sup> *Rom.*, 5. 4.

<sup>16</sup> The pupils of Hegesias, who starved themselves to death; see Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, I. 34. It is possible that Boswell read this story “somewhere” in Montaigne; it occurs in his essay *Of Diversion*, from which Boswell apparently derived materials for *Hyp.* 2, 11, and 15.

<sup>17</sup> John Hughes (1677-1720) was remembered chiefly for this tragedy, his

*Eudocia.* Hold—Stay thee yet.—O madness of despair!  
And would'st thou die? Think, ere thou leap the gulf,  
When thou hast trod that dark, that unknown way,  
Can'st thou return? What if the change prove worse;  
O think, if then—

*Phocyas.* No—thought's my deadliest foe;  
'Tis lingering racks, and slow consuming fires,  
And therefore to the grave I'd fly to shun it.

*Eudocia.* O fatal error!—Like a restless ghost  
It will pursue and haunt thee still; e'en there,  
Perhaps, in forms more frightful. Death's a name  
By which poor guessing mortals are deceived;  
'Tis no where to be found. Thou fly'st in vain  
From life, to meet again with that thou fly'st,  
How wilt thou curse thy rashness then? How start  
And shudder, and shrink back? Yet how avoid  
To put on thy new being?

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last work, which Pope is said to have considered his only claim to poetical reputation, and which Johnson (*Lives of the Poets*) mentions as having a popularity so continuous that *Siege* became common as a catch title. Hughes was otherwise a contributor to *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Guardian*, the editor of Spenser's works, and the author of various compositions for music, designed to show that English was as effective for singing as Italian.

No. LII. Jan. 1782.

## [ON PAST &amp; PRESENT ]

*Naturaliter audita visis laudamus libentius; et præsentia invidia, præterita veneratione prosequimur.*—VELLEIUS PATERCULUS.<sup>1</sup>

“We are naturally more inclined to praise things of which we have heard,  
“than things which we ourselves see; and we envy present merit, but  
“venerate what is past.”

THE observation of Pope that “man never *is* but always *to be* bleſt”<sup>2</sup> is not quite exact. For, discontent casts a wishful eye backwards as well as forwards, and we have often sighed for a return of past scenes which when present were dull or even disagreeable. As a great deal of man’s happiness is in hope, a part of it is in recollection; and I have frequently experienced it as a kind circumstance in our constitution that agreeable circumstances are remembered with still more pleasure than they originally afforded; while disagreeable circumstances are softened in the memory.

There is something in distance, whether of time or of place, that affects the imagination with I know not what mysterious feelings of preference: and this I am persuaded is the chief cause of that strange propensity which may be traced in every recorded period of time, to lament “the degeneracy of the age,” and gravely maintain that former times were much better in all respects than the present.

The Greeks and Romans delighted in fanciful representations of an early state of terrestrial felicity, to which they gave the name of the *Golden age*, when all was spontaneous fertility, serene temperature, amicable agreement, and gay delight. They supposed that there was at first a change considerably to the worse, and then came what they called the *Silver age*. But that at last the state of things grew as bad as what they themselves found them, and this was the *Iron age*.

In the Latin language, the word which signifies *older*, is also used to denote being more excellent—“*Antiquior, melior, potior, charior, quod quæ antiquiora sunt sint fere meliora*”—because what are older are generally better,” says *Ainsworth*; and he quotes

<sup>1</sup> *Historia Romana*, 2. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on Man*, I. 95.

passages from *Cicero* and *Quinctilian* where it carries that sense.<sup>3</sup> Nay, in our own language, *old* is an epithet of respect. Witness that illustrious sound, which has made many a generous breast heave—OLD ENGLAND!

Since that iron age, it is truly curious, and if we are in good humour it must make us smile, to observe how not only the satyrists, to whom some exaggeration is allowed, but the sober moralists of each succeeding age, have asserted, that it is worse than those which preceded it. They are not indeed very accurate in chronology. They by no means point out any definitive space of time between which and the sad period of depravation, a comparison may be made. It is enough to utter the general gloomy charge of being worse. But it should be considered, that this charge cannot possibly be true in all ages, For if it were,<sup>4</sup> the world must have been at an end long before now.

Though I have assigned some unknown power in distance upon the human imagination as the chief cause of the preference given to former times over the present, I agree with *Velleius<sup>5</sup> Paterculus* in the passage which I have taken as a motto to this paper, that there is also a mixture of envy which contributes to it. There is an acrimonious pride which secretly pervades most dispositions, and makes men unwilling to be sensible of the worth of their cotemporaries.

Of a similar nature with this, but more extensive in its influence, is that rigid false virtue which affects to despise and abhor human nature in general. A person of that character is thus strikingly addressed by *Fielding*, in one of his Poems:

<sup>3</sup> Robert Ainsworth (1660–1743) was engaged to prepare a Latin dictionary by publishers who had been asked for such an assistance, in 1714. The work—*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae compendiarius: or, a Compendious Dictionary of the Latin Tongue, designed principally for the use of the British Nations*, appeared in 1736; Ainsworth received £666 for his labors. The dictionary was long considered the standard, new editions being issued as late as 1829.

<sup>4</sup> The passage is printed with the original punctuation, which Boswell left uncorrected. It is probable that he intended to use a period after *ages* rather than to add *For if it were*, etc., to the preceding clause. It is characteristic of him to express his sententious remarks in short sentences—and to regard clauses as sentences! See the last unit of the third paragraph, *supra*, and *Hyp.* 59 n. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Originally printed *Valerius*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

O thou that dar'st thus proudly scorn thy kind,  
 Search with impartial scrutiny thy mind.  
 Disdaining outward flatterers to win,  
 Dost thou not feed a flatterer within?  
 While other passions temperance may guide,  
 Feast not with too delicious meals thy pride.  
 On vice triumphant while thy censures fall,  
 Be sure no envy mixes with thy gall.<sup>6</sup>

And afterwards,

A peevish sour perverseness of the will  
 Oft we miscall antipathy to ill.

It is surely more agreeable to good notions of Providence, that the world should be in a progressive state of improvement; and I do sincerely think that this age is better than ancient times. *Shakespeare*, in his tragedy of *Macbeth*, admits that ancient times were worse in the most important concern of society:

I' th' olden time,  
 Ere human statute purg'd the general weal.<sup>7</sup>

And every candid thinking man must acknowledge with comfort the peace and security which we enjoy under the regular administration of justice.

War, of which I have testified my full disapprobation in a former paper, though it still rages in spite of polished manners and Christian gentleness, is a much milder evil than in more rude ages. *Sir John Pringle*, in one of his excellent discourses from the chair of the Royal Society,<sup>8</sup> has pointed out how much the modern

<sup>6</sup> *Of True Greatness. An Epistle to George Dodington, Esq.* Boswell quotes lines 41–48, 53–54. The first line read originally, “O though”; Boswell did not correct the error.

<sup>7</sup> *Macbeth*, 3. 4. 76. Boswell read Shakespeare edited by Theobald; *human* and *general* are his emendation of the line,

Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal.

Boswell's expression of faith in progress is part of his general belief in man's advance through trial to ultimate good; cf. *Hyp.* 39 n. 10.

<sup>8</sup> For a biographical notice, see *Hyp.* 17 n. 3. The sound and intelligent comments with which, on six occasions, Sir John presented the Copley medal to the scientist considered by the Royal Society to be the most eminent of the year,

improvements in gunnery have abated the horrors of human massacre in its very execution, and the tenderness with which prisoners, especially the sick and wounded, are treated, makes the temper of this age appear angelick, when compared with ancient ferocity.

When we review the condition of our ancestors as authentically ascertained by publick registers, and by histories, we find that the *old barons* lived in savage tyranny, and their vassals in servile dependence; that feuds between great families produced the most shocking scenes of rapine and murder; the successful perpetrators of which seem never to have felt remorse; and in short, that men very much resembled the wild beasts of the desart. Nor was there more honesty then than now, notwithstanding the expression “*prisca fides*—ancient fidelity,”<sup>9</sup> for, instances of the deepest cunning and most detestable treachery occur in the earliest annals.

We are insensibly deceived into an enthusiastick admiration of ancient characters, by having our fancies heated in our undistinguishing youthful days with the ballads in which violence is displayed with all the interesting appearances of heroism.<sup>10</sup> This

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show the range and thoroughness of his knowledge. These *Discourses* were published singly, as given, and collected in a volume in 1783. Boswell alludes here to the lecture *On the Theory of Gunnery*, last of the collection, delivered in 1778. The others were *On the different Kinds of Air* (1773); *On the Torpedo* (1774); *On the Attraction of Mountains* (1775); *On some late Improvements of the Means for preserving the Healt of Mariners*—the occasion of presenting the medal to Captain Cook—(1776); *On the Invention and Improvements of the reflecting Telescope* (1777).

<sup>9</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6. 878.

Boswell's remarks in this paragraph are at variance with his usual romantic enthusiasm for the feudal system (see n. 11, below). The essay strikes me as a criticism of what Boswell clearly thought a youthful weakness in himself; he is endeavoring to attain the mature and reasonable point of view held by Dr. Johnson on the contrast of past and present. Cf. their dispute on the subject, discussed in *Hyp.* 19 n. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Boswell's opinions on ancient poetry vary to suit the occasion. The superior tone which he adopts here is repeated in a letter to Langton in 1774 (*Letters of B.*, 1. 200)—“Have you read Warton's first volume of the *History of Poetry*? He will have a more agreeable field as he advances.” (The first volume ended with Chaucer.) A year before, however, he had written to Bishop Percy, upon a projected edition of ancient poetry (*ibid.*, 1. 191)—

Were I to judge from my own feelings alone, and indeed my own wishes, I should be

strengthens the natural disposition which mankind have to regard antiquity in general, which is so prevalent, that societies are formed for the express purpose of collecting and illustrating every thing that is old, no matter what it may have been in "its own day;" and perhaps there is no class of men more industrious and more zealous in their pursuits than Antiquaries.<sup>11</sup> In *Leeds*, where one would not expect it, there is a very good public library, where strangers are treated with great civility, of which I for one retain

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for your publishing as many volumes of the same kind as your time will allow; for I defy you to publish more than I shall read with pleasure.

It is possible that his interest is merely historical and antiquarian—or merely "feudal"; see note following, and Boswell's letter to Johnson in 1775, on Erse MSS, stating that he "would subscribe for all the Erse that can be printed be it old or new, that the language may be preserved" (*Letters of B.*, I. 211).

Boswell seems in general to have developed in himself (possibly from his admiration of Plato, or possibly from a Puritanical desire to suppress one of his own romantic tastes) a distrust of the "artificial passions" engendered by poetry and pageantry; see *Hyp.* 12 n. 4, and *Boswelliana*, 237-38:

Boswell said that the descriptions of human life which we find in books are very false, because written in retirement. When a painter would take a portrait or a landscape, he is always sure to be present, whereas a painter of human life gets away from the object, buries himself in the shade, or basks in the sunshine, and consequently gives either too black or too gay a creature of his imagination, which he calls human life.

See also *ibid.*, 250:

It has often occurred to me that artificial passions are stronger than real ones, just as a wall built with good mortar is found to be harder and worse to separate than the natural rock. A passion for pageantry, and many more of the passions generated in civilized life, often influence men more than the real genuine passions natural to man.

<sup>11</sup> Boswell's true attitude toward the antiquary is as doubtful as that toward ancient poetry. For all his impatience here, he gives every evidence of enthusiasm for collecting antiquities in the letter to Bishop Percy, cited above:

I am afraid I shall be able to furnish you with very scanty supplies of poetry. I shall, however, give you the offer of a few pieces; and if any of them meet with your approbation, I shall be happy. Your essay on the state of manners on the borders before the union of England and Scotland will be very pleasing to the lovers of British antiquities; especially such as still retain the old feudal spirit, which, I own, I do, and glory in the consciousness of it. I hope to find some materials for you in the records of the Scottish Privy Council.

Johnson and Lord Auchinleck both desired Boswell to make a study of "old tenures and old charters of Scotland," and it would appear that Boswell had made some efforts in that direction (see *Hyp.* 58 n. 15); in one of his own notes to the *Life of J.* (3. 471 n. 2) he boasts of his antiquarian blood:

I have some hereditary claim to be an Antiquary; not only from my Father, but as being descended, by the mother's side, from the able and learned Sir John Skene, whose merit bids defiance to all the attempts which have been made to lessen his fame.

a grateful sense.<sup>12</sup> I there found a manuscript containing the coats of arms and descents of the families of the West Riding of Yorkshire, upon which there is this inscription which I copied as highly expressive of a true devotee to a Museum: "Every ingenious fragment is venerable to the Virtuoso, and always pleasant to a curious inquisitive mind. But, a collector should have the industry of a Hercules; and the patience of a Socrates; an eye like Argus; and a purse like Crœsus."

As rapine and murder were more frequent in former ages than this, and treachery as frequent, so, it cannot be denied that Adultery was at least as frequent as it is now, and drunkenness a great deal more so.<sup>13</sup> The two first crimes indeed decreased long before our time. But I will venture to say, that in other respects we have never had an age less criminal than this. The balance of morality therefore is in our favour. And notwithstanding the cry of infidelity and irreligion which however is not louder than in former times, I have the satisfaction to think that good Christians have no reason to lament that either the number or the weight of believers is diminished. We have a pious prince upon the throne. We have great lights in the church. We have many distinguished men amongst the laity who have stood forth in support of the truth of Revelation.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Boswell probably visited this library when he was spending a "forthnight in mortal felicity" with the regiment of Colonel James Stuart, second son of the Earl of Bute, in 1779 (*Letters of B.*, 2. 299). He was so delighted by his visit that he repeats the chief details concerning host, itinerary, and date, in the *Life of J.*, 3. 454:

Having been in Scotland recruiting, [Colonel Stuart] obligingly asked me to accompany him to Leeds, then the headquarters of his corps; from thence to London for a short time, and afterwards to other places to which the regiment might be ordered. Such an offer, at a time of the year when I had full leisure, was very pleasing; especially as I was to accompany a man of sterling good sense, information, discernment, and conviviality; and was to have a second crop in one year of London and Johnson. Of this I informed my illustrious friend, in characteristical warm terms, in a letter dated the 30th of September, from Leeds.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Hebr.*, 67:

We talked of change of manners. Dr. Johnson observed, that our drinking less than our ancestors was owing to the change from ale to wine. "I remember (said he,) when all the decent people in Lichfield got drunk every night, and were not the worse thought of. Ale was cheap, so you pressed strongly. When a man must bring a bottle of wine, he is not in such haste. Smoking has gone out."

See also n. 16 below.

<sup>14</sup> See an instance of this assertion in *Hyp.* 53. For a clear statement of reasons why the whole "common sense of the country was entirely on the side

If there be not so much reverence for "the powers that be"<sup>15</sup> in this age as in some former periods, which I have regretted in my paper upon Government, I trust that is a temporary evil. The subject is too delicate for *The Hypochondriack* to say more. If there be less learning amongst us, there is a much more general diffusion of knowledge. The circulation of newspapers and magazines alone conveys so great a variety of information, instruction, and embellishment, through all ranks of people in this country, that their minds are enriched infinitely beyond those of the men of other times; and surely the women in general of the present age have an unquestioned superiority over their sex in any former period.<sup>16</sup>

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of Revelation as against Deism," see Stephen, *History of English Thought in the 18th Century*, 2. 368-69. Johnson himself was of course a notable example; see note following, and *Hyp.* 48 n. 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Rom.*, 13. 1. See *Hyp.* 19. Boswell's juxtaposition here of impiety and lack of reverence for the government may result from his recollection of one of the conversations in Scotland (*Hebr.*, 309):

I asked if it was not strange that government should permit so many infidel writings to pass without censure. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is mighty foolish. It is for want of knowing their own power. The present family on the throne came to the crown against the will of nine tenths of the people. Whether those nine tenths were right or wrong, it is not our business now to enquire. But such being the situation of the royal family, they were glad to encourage all who could be their friends. Now you know every bad man is a Whig; every man who has loose notions. The church was all against this family. They were, as I say, glad to encourage any friends; and therefore, since their accession, there is no instance of any man being kept back on account of his bad principles; and hence this inundation of impiety."

Boswell's cheerful hope that the ills of his day are but temporary is paralleled by Johnson's answer to Paoli (*Life of J.*, 2. 93), "Sir, his gloom of infidelity, I hope, is only a transient cloud passing through the hemisphere, which will soon be dissipated, and the sun break forth with his usual splendor." See also n. 16.

<sup>16</sup> At seventeen Boswell wrote to Temple (*Letters of B.*, 1. 2):

We talk a great deal of genius, fine language, improving our style, &c., but I am afraid, solid learning is much wore out.

This ponderous pronouncement, no doubt an echo of Lord Auchinleck, remained in Boswell's mind (see *Hyp.* 4, 21, 50), but he was clearly more in sympathy with the zest for general information which he found in his own contemporaries (cf. *Hyp.* 27); he describes himself (*Hebr.*, 58) as having "a pretty good stock of general learning and knowledge." Dr. Johnson himself was undecided in the contest between learning and general knowledge. He criticized the Scots for the thinness of their learning (see *Hyp.* 50 n. 6), but when Lord Monboddo deplored the fact, he sanely observed that there was reason for it, since

We have the advantage of all the modern discoveries in science and in art, and of the numerous conveniences and elegant aids to pleasure, unknown to our ancestors. So that we may have more happiness in one day in London, than they could have in a large portion of their lives. It is narrow thinking to maintain, that it is more desirable to have few wants, I hope I have established in a

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learning would not “do so much for a man as formerly” (*Hebr.*, 90); when Boswell complained that authors were no longer assisted by patrons, he responded (*ibid.*, 66),

“No, Sir. If learning cannot support a man, if he must sit with his hands across till somebody feeds him, it is to him a bad thing, and it is better as it is. With patronage, what flattery! what falsehood! . . .”

This is equivalent to a defense of general publication and its necessary corollary, a large audience of general readers—a defense which Johnson made again in 1776; he asserted that multitudinous publication did not elevate the common people out of their sphere (*Life of J.*, 3. 42–43), and that it did not suffocate good literature (*ibid.*, 3. 378):

Virgil is less talked of than Pope, and Homer is less talked of than Virgil; but they are not less admired. We must read what the world reads at the moment. It has been maintained that this superfetation, this teeming of the press in modern times, is prejudicial to good literature, because it obliges us to read so much of what is of inferior value, in order to be in the fashion; so that better works are neglected for want of time, because a man will have more gratification of his vanity in conversation, from having read modern books, than from having read the best works of antiquity. But it must be considered, that we have now more knowledge generally diffused; all our ladies read now, which is a great extension.

A compromise between the two points of view is his praise for Addison’s purpose in conducting *The Spectator* (*Life of Addison*):

That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. His purpose was to infuse literary curiosity by gentle and unsuspected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy: he therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar.

In the *Life of J.*, 3. 4 there is a general résumé of what Boswell has here put forth:

He praised the ladies of the present age, insisting that they were more faithful to their husbands, and more virtuous in every respect, than in former times, because their understandings were better cultivated. It was an undoubted proof of his good sense and good disposition, that he was never querulous, never prone to inveigh against the present times, as is so common when superficial minds are on the fret. On the contrary, he was willing to speak favourably of his own age; and, indeed, maintained its superiority in every respect, except in its reverence for government; the relaxation of which he imputed, as its grand cause, to the shock which our monarchy received at the Revolution, though necessary; and secondly, to the timid concessions made to faction by successive administrations in the reign of his present Majesty.

See also *Hebr.*, 87—“We are as strong as [our ancestors], and a great deal wiser.” Swift had no idea that his contemporaries were at all well informed, especially in the case of women; see *Of the Education of Ladies* (*Works*, 9. 262).

former paper, my opinion that the more innocent pleasures we can enjoy the better we are.<sup>17</sup>

But I feel with peculiar fondness the advantage of this age over ancient times in civility of manners; not the constrained affection and deceit recommended by a celebrated nobleman;<sup>18</sup> but such an habitual complacency and politeness as is intended only for the mutual happiness of social intercourse. *Ovid*, to whose poetical merit sufficient justice has not yet been done, gives us this thought in most beautiful verses in his *Art of Love*:<sup>19</sup>

*Prisca juvent alios, ego me nunc denique natum  
Gratulor; hæc ætas moribus apta meis.  
Non quia nunc terræ lentum subducitur aurum,  
Lectaque diverso littore concha venit.  
Nec quia decrescunt effosso marmore montes,  
Nec quia cæruleæ mole fugantur aquæ.  
Sed quia cultus adest, nec nostros mansit in annos  
Rusticitas priscis illa superstes avis.*

Let ancient manners other men delight;  
But me the modern please as more polite.  
Not that materials now in gold are wrought,  
And distant shores for orient pearls are sought;  
Nor for that hills exhaust their marble veins,  
And structures rise whose bulk the sea restrains.  
But that the world is civilized of late,  
And polish'd from the rust of former date.

*Congreve.*

I suppose there never was an instance where both the original author and translator spoke their own sentiments more sincerely, than *Ovid* and *Congreve* in this passage; and I hope my readers will be pleased that *The Hypochondriack* appears for the first time in a new year in such good humour with the age in which they and he live.

<sup>17</sup> *Hyp.* 40. See also *Hyp.* 4, 8, 20, 58. For notes on Boswell's loose sentence arrangement, of which this passage is a specimen, see n. 4 above, and *Hyp.* 59 n. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Lord Chesterfield. See *Hyp.* 20.

<sup>19</sup> Book 3. 1. 121 ff.

No. LIII. Feb. 1782.

## [ON WORDS]

*Natura rerum conditum est ut plura sint negotia quam vocabula.*—ULPIAN.<sup>1</sup>

“It is established in the nature of things, that there are more objects than “words.”

**W**ORDS, the representations, or rather signs of ideas and notions in the human race, though habitual to all of us, are, when abstractly considered, exceedingly wonderful; in so much, that by endeavouring to think of them with a spirit of intense inquiry, I have been affected even with giddiness and a kind of stupor, the consequence of having one’s faculties stretched in vain.<sup>2</sup> I suppose this has been experienced by many of my readers, who in a fit of musing, have tried to trace the connection between a word of ordinary use and its meaning, repeating the word over and over again, and still starting in a kind of foolish amazement, as if listening for information from some secret power in the mind itself.

<sup>1</sup> From the extracts incorporated in the *Digesta* of Justinian, 19. 5. 4. Of the thirty-nine authors represented in the work, Ulpian is the most conspicuous; his writings constitute about one-third of the whole.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell seems frequently to have suffered this result from too intense thinking; see *Hyp.* 10 n. 6, 22 n. 8, 26 n. 12, 39, 65 n. 10. In his *Journal of a Tour to Corsica* (3d. ed., 349) he describes his symptoms in somewhat the same terms as he uses in this essay:

This kind of conversation led me to tell [Paoli] how much I suffered from anxious speculations. With a mind naturally inclined to melancholy, and a keen desire of inquiry, I had intensely applied myself to metaphysical researches, and reasoned beyond my depth, on such subjects as it is not given to man to know. I told him I had rendered my mind a *camera obscura*, that in the very heat of youth I felt the *non est tanti*, the *omnia vanitas* of one who has exhausted all the sweets of his being, and is weary with dull repetition. I told him I had almost become forever incapable of taking a part in active life.

The chief subject which stretched Boswell’s mind was religion, in which I think he was afraid of “studying himself into infidelity,” like the Highland gentleman who so offended him (*Hebr.*, 191); see *Hyp.* 48 n. 6; *Letters of B.*, 1. 49. Another was politics, against which he warns Temple (*Letters of B.*, 2. 288)—

.... I must candidly tell you that I think you should not puzzle yourself with political speculations more than I do. Neither of us is fit for that sort of mental labour.

See also *ibid.*, 2. 306. It was largely fear of this mental dizziness which made Boswell dislike close examination of anything; see *Hyp.* 23, 24, 37, 65 and notes.

The *origin and progress of language* hath been of late treated with curious ingenuity by a learned judge, whose *lucubrations* upon that subject are well worth the perusal of every one who has a pleasure in studying it.<sup>3</sup> I admit that he gives a very plausible account of the gradations by which speech is formed, supposing it to be an art invented by man. But, after all I have read, I remain of opinion, that language is the immediate gift of Heaven; for it so far surpasses every thing else of which man is capable, that I cannot believe it to have been obtained otherwise than by revelation. I mean that the general faculty of communicating ideas and notions by articulate sounds has been so obtained. I do not deny that when once possessed of it, men have without supernatural assistance enlarged and varied and improved it.<sup>4</sup>

When we enter the *Bodleian*, or any other large library, and behold an immense number of volumes, it is a strange reflection that all these are just so many collections of “words, words,” as Polonius says, when interrogated what he is reading.<sup>5</sup> Such is the simple state of the matter. But when we think of the infinite variety of combinations of those words, and all the objects of understanding, imagination, and passion, which are deposited in a permanent species of preservation, we cannot but be struck with astonishment.

<sup>3</sup> The performance of James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, published in 1773. See *Hyp.* 20 n. 2. Originally, *lucubrations* was printed *lucruberations*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

<sup>4</sup> Boswell here enrolls himself among laymen who stand forth in support of the truth of revelation (see *Hyp.* 52), in opposition to rational or “mechanical” explanations of life (see *Hyp.* 6 n. 4). Cf. a late conversation with Johnson (1783), in which the sage says almost the same thing that Boswell offers in this essay, written in 1782 (*Life of J.*, 4. 239):

Talking of the origin of language. JOHNSON. “It must have come by inspiration. A thousand, nay, a million of children could not invent a language. While the organs are pliable, there is not understanding enough to form a language; by the time that there is understanding enough, the organs become stiff. We know that after a certain age we cannot learn to pronounce a new language. . . . When I maintain that language must have come by inspiration, I do not mean that inspiration is required for rhetorick, and all the beauties of language; for when once man has language, we can conceive that he may gradually form modifications of it. I mean only that inspiration seems to me necessary to give man the faculty of speech; to inform him that he may have speech; which I think he could no more find out without inspiration, than cows or hogs would think of such a faculty.”

<sup>5</sup> Another slip through quoting from memory; Hamlet replies thus sardonically to Polonius (2. 2. 194).

It is not my intention in this paper to attempt any profound investigation of the *principles of speech*, or of the *philosophy of rhetorick*. There are eminent writers by whom such enquiries have been ably pursued, and their books may be consulted by those who have leisure and inclination. If I can produce a few cursory observations which will entertain without fatiguing I gain my end.

The insensible manner in which we acquire our stock of words, is the cause of our not being filled with wonder at the extent of our acquisitions. There is a point of time when a child has but a single word; and could we but clearly contrast that point with an after period, when the same being, grown a man, has that number of words which every man in the world has, how rich would the mind appear!—how difficult would it be to conceive how such a multitude of particulars, all distinctly different can be lodged in the memory! A dictionary, or a *word book*, as the Dutch very well term it, is a prodigious magazine; and we have seen a new edition of a dictionary advertised with the addition of above ten thousand words! Were there nothing more in language than the mere remembering of certain sounds signifying certain things, without regard to all the scientifick niceties of Grammar, I should wonder at it; but when we think of it as modelled to fit all the inflexions of mental operation it is indeed amazing.

Notwithstanding the innumerable multitude of words which are to be found in the language of every country, *Ulpian's*<sup>6</sup> remark in my motto is certainly true, that there are more objects than words. Hence it is, that in a thousand instances we are sensible that what we mean, or what we feel, is not expressed by us with sufficient precision, and it is to be observed, that for the most part, men of uncommon fertility of mind, and quickness of fancy, are often at a loss for words. The truth is, they require many more words than other men, and they must also have them more speedily in readiness. There is no doubt that in travelling in a foreign country, a servant speaks the language sooner than his master; because the servant having occasion but for a few words soon gets them; and they are commodiously received in his head without being crowded, whereas the master has occasion for a great many, and they can with difficulty be kept so clearly separate. Were we

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<sup>6</sup> In the magazine text, *Ulphian*; left uncorrected by Boswell.

to consider our Stock of words as we do Bank Stock, or any other valuable fund, there would be a great pleasure in the consciousness of large possessions of that kind. Where indeed there is a very remarkable “*copia verborum*—plenty of words,”<sup>7</sup> a man values himself on it, and is valued by others. But in very few instances is our Stock of words ever thought of. To continue the metaphor of *Stock*, I have been told that a certain distinguished player, when he gave lectures at the *Piazza Coffee-house Covent Garden*, used from the number and vivacity of his thoughts to be from time to time at a loss for proper expression, and that he used fairly to borrow from his audience, stopping short and with great gravity saying “I want a word;” upon which somebody in the room who guessed from the sense what word would do, threw it up to him, with a friendly nod, as one would lend a man a shilling to pay his chair-hire; after which, the orator, having acknowledged the favour with a “thank you, Sir,” proceeded in his discourse.<sup>8</sup>

The comparative paucity of words to express objects, makes one word be used in different senses, and frequently produces that species of disputation, called from the Greek *Logomachy*; that is to say, contention about words, than which no contention is more

<sup>7</sup> Vida, *Art of Poetry*, 3. 300–301.

<sup>8</sup> This was Charles Macklin, or McLaughlin (169–?–1797), Irish comedian and author. He began his career with strolling players, and made his actual débüt in a farce of Fielding’s; after some success as a comedian, he became famous for restoring to the stage in 1741 the Shakespearean *Merchant of Venice* (displaced for forty years by Lord Lansdowne’s *Jew of Venice*). After a succession of quarrels with Fleetwood, Garrick, and Sheridan, he retired from the stage in 1753, and set up a tavern and coffee-house in the Piazza, Covent Garden. To this he added in 1754 a school of oratory, which he called The British Inquisition. Cf. *Biographia Dramatica*:

Of the latter part of this plan . . . . it is impossible to think, without ascribing to the author a degree of vanity almost bordering on madness. With very few qualifications as a critic, much success could not be augured from the lectures . . . . ; in a little time the few who resorted to his rooms gave up all ideas of improvement, and the whole assumed an air of burlesque; which was still heightened by the gravity of Macklin, who, trusting to the efficiency of his own powers, appeared every night full dressed, dictating to the town in all the airs of superior intelligence. Foote . . . . made him his daily food for laughter and ridicule by his questions, remarks, and repartees, [which] kept the audience in a continual roar.

Macklin became a bankrupt in 1755, but recouped his fortunes in 1759 with his *Love à la Mode* (see *Hyp.* 3). He also went back to the stage, even attempting *Macbeth*, and played until his memory failed him in 1789. Boswell knew the actor in his old age, and gives a vivid account of his cheerful sprightliness in *Letters of B.*, 2. 431.

keen and violent, the disputants being so much the more eager from their ignorance of what they are about; as men combat most desperately in the dark. Something of this I am afraid there ever will be while human nature is so constituted as we find it: but a good deal may be done to prevent it, by calmly attending to the import of terms, and ascertaining these by previous agreement. In careless and pleasant conversation this is not to be required. On the contrary, there is much amusement in beating about the fields of expression, and indulging in a play of words. And there is a species of wit which, however despised by some rigid criticks, has, I think, some merit when used easily and moderately, I mean *punning*, that we owe entirely to any word having more meanings than one. The answer of the comical fellow, who, upon being told "his coat was too short," said "it would be long enough before he got another," is an instance of agreeable surprise, produced by a pun, which I do not believe has been often excelled by any piece of verbal wit.<sup>9</sup> And that there is a wit of language as well as a wit of thought I am clearly convinced, notwithstanding the authority of *Addison*, who lays it down as a rule, that nothing is wit, which cannot bear a translation.<sup>10</sup> If he had said that he did not esteem highly any wit but that of thought, and made translation the test

<sup>9</sup> Swift did not concur in this opinion. He uses this pun as an example of the flat repartee of "fine people" in his satiric guide to *Polite and Ingenious Conversation*, Dialogue I (*Works*, 9. 407-408).

<sup>10</sup> *The Spectator*, 61. The Johnsonian circle also discussed the subject, Johnson usually showing such "a great contempt for that species of wit" (*Life of J.*, 2. 277) that Boswell carefully treasured every instance of his allowing it (*ibid.*, 4. 365; *Boswelliana*, 291), and recorded the fact that Johnson liked to make pun-parodies on quotations (*Hebr.*, 318). See *Hyp.* 55 n. 6.

Boswell loved puns; cf. *Life of J.*, 4. 365:

For my own part, I think no innocent species of wit should be suppressed; and that a good pun may be admitted among the smaller excellencies of lively conversation.

He proves his sincerity by a long note expatiating upon the wit of Burke, which Johnson had censured as "low" (*Hebr.*, 35-6). Boswell's collection of good things, his *Boswelliana*, shows how carefully he treasured the puns and witty plays of every one he knew, including himself; and that he was not alone in his respect for jesting is shown in a letter from George Dempster to Boswell (*Hebr.*, 466):

I see you as counsel in some causes which must have opened a charming field for your humourous vein. As it is more uncommon, so I verily believe it is more useful than the more serious exercise of reason; and, to a man who is to appear in publick, more *éclat* is to be gained, sometimes more money too, by a *bon-mot*, than a learned speech.

of it, I should not have disputed the proposition; for I would not dispute about tastes in wit more than in other things; but I cannot help seeing clearly that he has not attended to the inferior species of wit which is acknowledged in all countries.

If such superficial speculation upon words, as I have ventured to utter in this essay, can at all amuse, how must the mind be filled when we study a regular system of language. I am at present engaged in looking into a book of which I heard accidentally. It is entitled *Bayeri Museum Sinicum*, being a complete account of the Chinese language, printed at Petersburgh, in 1730;<sup>11</sup> and it appears to me to display an aggregate of knowledge, ingenuity, and art, that is enough to make us contemplate such powers of mind with inexpressible veneration.

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<sup>11</sup> *Museum Sinicum, in quo Sinicæ linguæ et litteraturæ ratio explicatur*, was the work of Gottfried Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738), the accomplished Orientalist. After years of study under La Croce, Huyn, and others, he taught at Leipzig and Königsberg; in 1726 he was called to St. Petersburg, where he remained as associate in the Imperial Academy until his death. He wrote various histories, and constantly improved his knowledge of Arabic, Coptic, Chinese, and Thibetan, but the *Museum Sinicum*, issued by the Academy, remains his greatest work.

No. LIV. March 1782.

## [ON RELIGION]

*Stude ergo cor tuum ab amore visibilium abstrahere, et ad invisibilia te transferre.*—THOMAS A KEMPIS.

“Use then thy utmost diligence to wean thy soul from the love of the “things that are seen, and set thy affections on things that are not seen.”

—STANHOPE.<sup>1</sup>

THAT to have Religion should ever be reckoned a proof of narrowness of mind, is, I think, one of the strangest errors which sophistry has been able to insinuate into thinking beings. By religion, I understand a belief in a great and good power, the supreme fountain of intelligence and felicity, joined with an habitual devotion or pious endeavours to direct all the powers of the soul towards that divine object, and, as much as may be, to approach to a similitude with what we conceive of the amiable nature of God. That certain notions of religion should indicate an injudicious and extravagant mind may be admitted. But even in that case surely the mind which believes much, is more enlarged than the mind which believes little, especially when the mind which believes much takes in magnificent and permanent views, bounded neither by time nor space.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the mind which believes little, however it may be strong and lively, takes in very limited and uncertain views, and instead of the contemplations of immensity and eternity, has its attention fixed only on what is to be found in this scene of things.

Supposing then that Religion were altogether a fiction, it is so grand a work of the imagination that the very ambition of a noble mind must desire to preserve it; and a man of true spirit I should

<sup>1</sup> George Stanhope (1660–1728) was one of the great preachers of Queen Anne’s day, and dean of Canterbury. His translation of the *Imitatio Christi*, which takes great liberties with the original in order to effect a flowing English style, was published in 1698 under the title *The Christian’s Pattern, or a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ*. New editions of the translation continued to appear up to 1865; in 1886 it was edited by Henry Morley.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 44, in which Boswell is disposed to doubt the good effects of expansive enthusiasm, and 55, in which he continues to support the view expressed in this essay. See also *Letters of B.*, 1. 49, 212, where his “grand and extensive notions” of religion and superstition are set forth.

suppose can never fail to feel an indignant jealousy whenever he perceives any attempt to destroy a system so honourable to human nature.

It appears to me that the fallacious prejudice which is too often entertained against Religion, is owing to its being considered only as a duty, not as a privilege, a comfort, an enjoyment; as also to dark and dismal views of it, erroneously given by men of gloomy or abjectly timorous minds.<sup>3</sup> I myself visited a celebrated infidel when he was dying, and when I tried to raise the pleasing hope of a future state, he said, "You never see it but through the medium of Tartarus, or Phlegethon, or Hell." I concluded that he must in his early years have had the idea of Religion so associated with that of misery, that he was instigated to exert himself against it as an enemy, without ever having candidly examined if it might not be a friend. A friend he would have found it. But vanity, as a fascinating mistress, seized upon his fondness, and never quitted her dominion over him.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Spectator*, 494; *Hyp.* 13, 19, 25, 40, 55 notes 8, 9; and Boswell's reflection in *Life of J.*, 3. 347—

The truth is, that philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe, at least so grave as to exclude all gaiety.

See also his letter to Zélide (*Letters of B.*, 1. 54)—

Let not religion make you unhappy. Think of God as he really is, and all will appear cheerful.

Johnson agreed with Boswell (*Hebr.*, 360):

"I am no friend to making religion appear too hard. Many good people have done harm by giving severe notions of it."

He was himself, however, one of the gloomy and timorous minds which he censured, when any discussion of death and judgment occurred; see *Hyp.* 14, 15, 55 and *notes*. His attitude may be found in a criticism of Blair for making one aspect of religious feeling "too hard" (*Life of J.*, 3. 385):

He said, "I read yesterday Dr. Blair's sermon on Devotion. . . . There is one part of it which I disapprove, and I'd have him correct it; which is, that 'he who does not feel joy in religion is far from the kingdom of heaven!' There are many good men whose fear of God predominates over their love. It may discourage. It was rashly said."

<sup>4</sup> David Hume (1711–1776), the Scottish philosopher and political theorist, is the infidel. Boswell knew him well; it is possible that this quotation is a part of the "entertaining and interesting memoirs of him, particularly when he knew himself to be dying," which Boswell promises in *Hebr.*, 33, "some time or other [to] communicate to the world." It is certainly what Boswell refers to in his letter to Mrs. Thrale (*Letters of B.*, 1. 255):

Our only literary news here is the death of David Hume. . . . It has shocked me to think of his persisting in infidelity. Gray . . . represents Hume as a child. I cannot agree

There is another cause, to which I am well persuaded the prejudice against Religion may be attributed, which is an apprehension that a rigid practice of morality will be indispensably required, the dread of which supposed excessive constraint makes some people heedlessly choose not to engage in Religion at all; like the unprofitable servant in the parable, who imagined his Lord to be "an austere man," and therefore hid his talent in a napkin.<sup>5</sup>

But this is a wretched delusion. For although the want of knowledge of what is right is an excuse for not doing it, no man can have that excuse whose ignorance is wilful, from his shunning knowledge, in order to be free from duty. Besides, no such rigid practice of morality as is almost impossible for the frailty of human nature to attain, is expected from a religious man; and whatever some cold, hard-minded, positive disputants have maintained, I have no doubt that good principles are often found in the same person with occasional bad practice. For this we have the manly and generous avowal of St. Paul, at once a very able man and a most sincere professor of Religion: "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do."<sup>6</sup> Where there really are good principles, there is hope that good practice will in time be uniform. Deviations from morality in those who profess Religion, are often particularly obnoxious to censure, because there

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with him. . . . My notion is that he had by long study in one view brought a *Stupor* upon his mind as to futurity. . . . Hume told me about six weeks before his death that he had been steady in his sentiments above forty years.

Johnson supports Boswell's remarks upon Hume's narrow thinking and vanity (*Life of J.*, 3. 173):

I mentioned to Dr. Johnson, that David Hume's persisting in his infidelity, when he was dying, shocked me much. JOHNSON. "Why should it shock you, Sir? Hume owned he had never read the New Testament with attention. Here then was a man, who had been at no pains to inquire into the truth of religion, and had continually turned his mind the other way. It was not to be expected that the prospect of death would alter his way of thinking, unless God should send an angel to set him right." I said, I had reason to believe that the thought of annihilation gave Hume no pain. JOHNSON. "It was not so, Sir. He had a vanity in being thought easy. It is more probable that he should assume an appearance of ease, than that so very improbable a thing should be, as a man not afraid of going (as, in spite of his delusive theory, he cannot be sure but he may go,) into an unknown state, and not being uneasy at leaving all he knew."

See also *ibid.*, 2. 122, *Hebr.*, 32, and *Letters of B.*, Index under HUME, especially 1. 160.

<sup>5</sup> *Luke*, 19. 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Rom.*, 7. 19—a favorite quotation; Boswell paraphrases it in a letter to Garrick (see *Hyp.* 6 n. 7).

are numbers who are glad of an opportunity to attack a religious person, being envious of his claims to superior worth, and because there may be a suspicion of hypocrisy; but where we are absolutely certain that good principles exist, as in the case of the apostle, there is a respect and kindness entertained for them, notwithstanding deficiencies and contradictions in practice. Hypocrisy is indeed detestable; but an acquaintance with life, or even a fair examination of our own belief and conduct, will teach us to distinguish it from inconstancy.<sup>7</sup> Far be it from me to encourage myself or others in the pernicious notion that good principles will atone for

<sup>7</sup> This is Johnson's famous distinction between principle and practice, which Boswell records in the *Life of J.*, 1. 484; 3. 276; and in *Hebr.*, 239, 409. He sums up the theory, offering as illustration the two instances from the *Tour to the Hebrides*, in his discussion of Johnson's character (*Life of J.*, 4. 457):

Here let the profane and licentious pause; let them not thoughtlessly say that Johnson was an *hypocrite*, or that his *principles* were not firm, because his *practice* was not uniformly conformable to what he professed.

Let the question be considered independent of moral and religious association; and no man will deny that thousands, in many instances, act against conviction. Is a prodigal, for example, an *hypocrite*, when he owns he is satisfied that his extravagance will bring him to ruin and misery? We are *sure* he *believes* it; but immediate inclination, strengthened by indulgence, prevails over that belief in influencing his conduct. Why then shall credit be refused to the *sincerity* of those who acknowledge their persuasion of moral and religious duty, yet sometimes fail of living as it requires? I heard Dr. Johnson once observe, "There is something noble in publishing truth, though it condemns one's self." And one who said in his presence, "he had no notion of people being in earnest in their good professions, whose *practice* was not suitable to them," was thus reprimanded by him:—"Sir, are you so grossly ignorant of human nature as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles, without having good *practice*?"

Johnson's strongest argument was that which he employed to Lady McLeod (*Hebr.*, 239) in discussing the morals of authors:

No man *practises* so well as he writes. . . . Only consider! You read a book; you are convinced by it; you do not know the authour. Suppose you afterwards know him, and find that he does not *practise* what he teaches; are you to give up your former conviction?

See also his *Letters*, 2. 234:

I have a mind to look on Queeney as my own dear girl; and if I set her a bad example, I ought to counteract it by good precepts; and he that knows the consequences of any fault is best qualified to tell them. I have through my whole progress of authourship honestly endeavoured to teach the right, though I have not been sufficiently diligent to practise it, and have offered mankind my opinion as a rule, but never professed my behaviour as an example.

Boswell for the most part agreed with Johnson (*Hebr.*, 58), but a despairing letter to Temple in 1790 shows a wavering in his confidence (*Letters of B.*, 2. 400):

In truth I am sensible that I do not sufficiently "try my ways" as the Psalmist says, and am almost inclined to think with you that my great Oracle, Johnson, *did* allow too much credit to good principles without good practice.

See also *Hyp.* 44 n. 9.

deliberate bad practice, and that conscience may safely be soothed by balancing faith against immorality. My intention is only to inculcate upon my readers that Religion is not to be avoided from fear either of galling strictness, or of a charge of hypocrisy. Unless in extraordinary cases of penitential discipline, or voluntary abstraction, the religious man may partake of this world's goods as easily and agreeably as other men;<sup>8</sup> and if he be clearly conscious of the integrity of his principles, let him be ever striving to have his practice as good as he can. Let not frequent failures discourage him, and sink him into despair; but let him with animated resolution renew his endeavours, considering that the more honest good there is in his life, the proportion of evil will be the less, and good may at length predominate; while in the mean time the world ought and perhaps will be just enough to allow him credit for what merit he has. We should let our light shine before

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 40. This is Johnson's opinion also; cf. *Hebr.*, 70:

Mr. Nairne said, he had an inclination to retire. I called Dr. Johnson's attention to this, that I might hear his opinion if it was right. JOHNSON. "Yes, when he has done his duty to society. In general, as every man is obliged not only to 'love God, but his neighbour as himself,' he must bear his part in active life; yet there are exceptions. Those who are exceedingly scrupulous (which I do not approve, for I am no friend to scruples,) and find their scrupulosity invincible, so that they are quite in the dark, and know not what they shall do,—or those who cannot resist temptations, and find they make themselves worse by being in the world, without making it better, may retire. .... I have thought of retiring, and have talked of it to a friend; but I find my vocation is rather to active life."

See also *Life of J.*, 2. 12—"It is our first duty to serve society, and, after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls." Johnson "never read of a hermit, but in imagination [he] kissed his feet; never read of a monastery, but [he] could fall on [his] knees, and kiss the pavement," (*Hebr.*, 70); yet his harsh comment to a Lady Abbess that she was in the convent "not for the love of virtue, but the fear of vice" (*Life of J.*, 2. 498), shows that his feeling for the active life was constant. Cf. the sardonic observations in *Rasselas*:

The life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout. (Chap. 21.)

He that lives well in the world is better than he that lives well in a monastery. But, perhaps, every one is not able to stem the temptations of publick life, and, if he cannot conquer, he may properly retreat. (Chap. 47.)

See also *The Adventurer*, 67, 126; *The Idler*, 32, 38; *The Rambler*, 5, and the significant observation preserved in Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, 1. 219—"Solitude is dangerous to reason, without being favourable to virtue."

The conversations upon fasting and abstinence from wine are also to the point (see *Hyp.* 33 n. 7; *Life of J.*, 2. 498; 3. 258).

men<sup>9</sup> such as it is, though it be but glimmering and flashy, hoping it may become steady and bright. If from the selfish fear of being suspected of hypocrisy, we conceal what light of Religion we have, we contribute to encrease the cold darkness which is so baneful to rational felicity. When no appearance of Religion is to be found in a person's ordinary life and conversation, how is it to be supposed that there is in that instance any reality?

This paper, I perceive, would be too long were I now to add the rest of the thoughts upon Religion, with which my mind is at present agreeably supplied. I therefore reserve them for my next number. But I beg leave at this parting to recommend to any of my readers who may not know it, the valuable, I had almost said divine, treatise of *Thomas à Kempis*, from which my motto is taken, a treatise which in leading to the *imitation of Christ*, who is allowed even by infidels to be the most perfect *pattern*<sup>10</sup> of goodness that ever appeared upon earth, quiets, comforts, and cheers the soul in the gentlest and yet most effectual manner. Its very general reception in various languages by the most eminent men, as well as by innumerable private Christians, is a certain proof of its benignant merit. There is said to have been an edition of it in one language or other every month, since its first publication, three centuries ago.<sup>11</sup> I have two editions of it in Latin; a very small one with cuts, printed at Antwerp, 1664, to carry in my pocket; and the splendid Louvre edition of 1640, in folio, which I keep for my old age, in case I shall be permitted to arrive at that state.

<sup>9</sup> *Mtth.*, 5. 16. Cf. *Hyp.* 44 n. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Boswell italicizes here, as he does occasionally elsewhere (cf. *Hyp.* 55 n. 6), in order to point a half-punning reference to the title of a well-known work—in this case, Stanhope's translation of the *Imitatio* (see n. 1 above).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 256:

Thomas à Kempis (he observed) must be a good book, as the world has opened its arms to receive it. It is said to have been printed, in one language or other, as many times as there have been months since it first came out.

Boswell's lack of quotation marks makes it difficult to know whether the computation is Johnson's or his own; as usual, however, he takes more care to phrase the matter clearly in the *Life of J.* than he does in the essay.

No. LV. April 1782.

[ON RELIGION—*Continued*]

*Quieti, modesti, DEI nostri liberalitate securi, spem futuræ felicitatis, fide præsentis ejus majeſtatis animamur. Sic et beati resurgimus, et futuri contemplatione jam vivimus.*—MINUCIUS FELIX.<sup>1</sup>

“Moderate and contented, trusting in the liberality of our GOD, we confide “in the present protection of his power, and thence are animated with “the hope of future felicity. Thus, not only shall we have a joyful “resurrection, but even now, in contemplation of an hereafter, we live “happy.”—SIR DAVID DALRYMPLE.

WHEN a man is in high spirits, and he feels a degree of exultation in his existence, Religion is embraced by his mind with a facility and complacency which it is highly agreeable to experience. It seems natural that the happiness which animates his<sup>2</sup> frame should be continued. The mists of doubt disappear in the sunshine of gladness; and “*It must be so*” is fully present to his soul while he thinks of immortality.

To be in the state which I have now described, when the hour of death shall come, is my very fervent wish. The dread of that aweful event is so habitual to me that I can conceive nothing so desireable as relief from its gloom.<sup>3</sup> And perhaps it may please

<sup>1</sup> From the *Octavius*, a dialogue arguing the excellence of Christianity. The translation is that of Boswell's friend Sir David Dalrymple (see *Hyp.* 21 n. 6).

<sup>2</sup> Originally *the*; corrected by a note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 56. For this happiness of high spirits, see *Hyp.* 23 and notes, and contrast to *Hyp.* 39 and notes.

<sup>3</sup> In 1777 Boswell told Johnson (*Life of J.*, 3. 174),

I had been, for moments in my life, not afraid of death; therefore I could suppose another man in that state of mind for a considerable space of time. He said, “he had never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him.”

This feeling is borne out by Johnson's letters (1. 134; 2. 67, 133, 212) and by the conversations in the *Life of J.*, where the fear of death is held to be natural to man (2. 107; 3. 179, 334; *Hebr.*, 205), and impossible to avoid (2. 341; 3. 335; 4. 321, 422, 455). Johnson was frank concerning his terror (*ibid.*, 4. 299, 334, 345), but almost childish in his frantic refusal to speak of death at length, or to fortify his mind against the fear of it (*ibid.*, 2. 122; *Hebr.*, 433).

Boswell, however, constantly made the effort to accustom his mind to the idea, in spite of the fact that he found the “sure prospect” of death “frightful” (*Letters of B.*, 2. 431); see *Hyp.* 14–16, 68, and *Life of J.*, 2. 107, 122; *Hebr.*, 433.

Infinite Benignity to impart to me what others have certainly enjoyed. Not that such a privilege should be deemed an essential requisite of divine favour to a departing spirit. For I believe many a saint has made a triumphant transition from dreary darkness to eternal light.

That St. Paul was rapt into the third Heavens, and had before death a glimpse of the beatifick vision is a fact for which we have his unquestionable authority;<sup>4</sup> and one cannot help indulging the contemplation of so noble a distinction! What a life of celestial faith should one lead! What exalted fortitude should one experience, after having actually been in the amazing scene of glory! St. Paul was honoured with a commission to be the Great Apostle of the Gentiles; and Christians in general are not to expect what it was proper should be granted to him. Yet I do sincerely believe that many humble, pious persons have had a foretaste of the happiness of Heaven, such as they were sufficiently sure was not a delusion, and by which they have been ever after serenely comforted.

It is in vain for those who have felt nothing of piety to assert, that there can be no reality in it. *Vital Religion*, as it is well expressed,<sup>5</sup> is as undoubtedly an object of perception and taste, and delight, to numbers of the human race as poetry, or painting, or musick. This is a *fact in the History of Mankind*, which is fully ascertained by proof, by a series of testimony for ages, by those who have experienced it. It is then equally unreasonable to disbelieve the experiences of piety, as the experiences of any of the three sister arts as they are called, merely because we ourselves have not had any experience. We know well that there are some who have very little pleasure, and many who have no pleasure at all, from one or other, or perhaps from any of these arts. But are they entitled to deny that others have? Men may indeed, if they are unbelievers, maintain fairly enough, that the joy of Religion is only a *pleasure of the imagination*,<sup>6</sup> and the effect of enthusiasm.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor., 12. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Boswell makes this allusion again in his discussion of Young's *Night Thoughts* (*Life of J.*, 4. 71); I cannot trace the source.

<sup>6</sup> Boswell italicizes in order to create a half-punning allusion to the title of essays 411-421 in *The Spectator*, or to Akenside's poem of the same name, published in 1744—*Pleasures of the Imagination*. For other instances of this sort

Be it so in this state of the argument. And is not the pious man superior to those who are not pious, at least as much as those who have a taste in poetry, painting, or musick are superior to those who have none? If “the poet’s eye in a fine frenzy, rolling and glancing from Heaven to earth, from earth to Heaven,”<sup>7</sup> raises him above those whose conceptions are dull, and who see only what is immediately before them, is not he still higher in the intellectual scale, whose mind is occupied with the sublime ideas of divinity? My readers I trust always remember that I mean an elevating and pleasing piety. If a man’s Religion be not of a good kind, if it makes him unhappy, I admit that the irreligious have a right to look down upon him.<sup>8</sup> But I am persuaded that our most holy faith, when well understood, produces upon the whole the truest felicity even in this life.

I am not an absolute enemy either to enthusiasm or superstition,<sup>9</sup> and the celebrated pamphlet, entitled “The Enthusiasm of

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of conceit, see *Hyp.* 26 n. 10, 28 n. 9, 31 n. 8, 54 n. 10. Boswell perhaps indulged himself in it because it had a literary quality which Johnson would not despise as he despised other puns (see *Hyp.* 53 n. 10).

<sup>7</sup> *M.N.D.*, 5. 1. 12. Boswell alludes to this passage again in *Hyp.* 27.

The inconsistency of Boswell’s spelling in this paragraph (*superiour*, *superior*) is not more surprising than his double spelling of *cheerful* in *Hyp.* 24, his rendering of Hippocrates as *Hippocrates* and *Hypocratus* in *Hyp.* 63, his wavering between *Mæcenas* and *Mecenas* in *Hyp.* 61, and his indecision from essay to essay, between *Shakespeare* and *Shakspeare*, *Quintilian*, *Quintillian*, and *Quinctilian*, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 54 on the impropriety of harshness and severity in religious ideas. Boswell appears to have forgotten the gloom of Johnson here; in reality he made exception for the person of moody temper, which he fails to state in this passage. Cf. *Life of J.*, 4. 346:

If [Johnson’s lack of confidence in happiness after death] should be urged by the enemies of Christianity, as if its influence on the mind were not benignant, let it be remembered, that Johnson’s temperament was melancholy, of which such direful apprehensions of futurity are often a common effect.

<sup>9</sup> See *Hyp.* 44 n. 11 on enthusiasm in the eighteenth century, and *Hyp.* 54. The interpretation of it which Boswell gives in the ensuing paragraph here is closely akin to that of Mme de Staël (*Germany*, 3. 10):

Many people are prejudiced against enthusiasm; they confound it with fanaticism, which is a great mistake. Fanaticism is an exclusive passion, the object of which is an opinion; enthusiasm is connected with the harmony of the universe: it is the love of the beautiful, elevation of soul, enjoyment of devotion, all united in one single feeling which combines grandeur and repose. The sense of this word amongst the Greeks affords the noblest definition of it: enthusiasm signifies *God in us*. In fact when the existence of man is expansive it has something divine.

See also *ibid.*, 4. 1. It is only fair to present the contrary opinion of the “cele-

Methodists and Papists compared," is very harmless and ineffectual in my opinion. That there are many good Christians papists, and many good Christians methodists, I have no manner of doubt. Nor do I apprehend that any of them will be the worse for some warmth of imagination. The truth is, that there is to me something very pleasing in the mysticks of all denominations. *Madame Guion*<sup>10</sup> has been my acquaintance from my early youth;

brated infidel" David Hume, in his essay *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm* (*Essays*, ed. Green and Grose, I. 145):

But the mind of man is also subject to an unaccountable elevation and presumption, arising from prosperous success, from luxuriant health, from strong spirits, or from a bold and confident disposition. In such a state of mind, the imagination swells with great, but confused conceptions, to which no sublunary beauties or enjoyments can correspond. Every thing mortal and perishable vanishes as unworthy of attention. And a full range is given to the fancy in the invisible regions or world of spirits, where the soul is at liberty to indulge itself in every imagination, which may best suit its present taste and disposition. Hence arise raptures, transports, and surprising flights of fancy; and confidence and presumption still encreasing, these raptures, being altogether unaccountable, and seeming quite beyond the reach of our ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of that Divine Being, who is the object of devotion. In a little time, the inspired person comes to regard himself as a distinguished favourite of the Divinity; and when this frenzy once takes place, which is the summit of enthusiasm, every whimsy is consecrated: Human reason, and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides: And the fanatic madman delivers himself over, blindly, and without reserve, to the supposed illapses of the spirit, and to inspiration from above. Hope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of Enthusiasm.

Hume admits, however, that enthusiasm is better for the body politic than superstition, since being "the infirmity of bold and ambitious tempers, [it] is naturally accompanied with a spirit of liberty; as superstition, on the contrary, renders men tame and abject, and fits them for slavery."

For Boswell's interest in the supernatural see *Hyp.* 26 and notes, 48, 63, 66, 67. On one occasion only, in 1778, he deprecated his superstitious tendency —apparently because he considered it an evidence of either useless despondency or immaturity (*Life of J.*, 3. 255):

I felt a sort of regret that I was so easy [with Dr. Johnson]. I missed that awful reverence with which I used to contemplate [him] . . . . I have a wonderful superstitious love of mystery; when, perhaps, the truth is, that it is owing to the cloudy darkness of my own mind. I should be glad that I am more advanced in my progress of being, so that I can view Dr. Johnson with a steadier and clearer eye. . . . Would it not be foolish to regret that we shall have less mystery in a future state? . . . . This reflection, which I thus freely communicate, will be valued by the thinking part of my readers, who may have themselves experienced a similar state of mind.

<sup>10</sup> Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Mothe Guyon (1648–1717), prophetess of mysticism and author of spiritual works, was a French quietist more honored in England and Germany than in her own country. An unhappy youth and married life caused her to seek solace in religious experiences, and these were turned definitely to mysticism by the Duchesse de Béthune, who introduced Mme Guyon to the devout at court. Fénelon was one of her followers until her orthodoxy was questioned; she was sent to Bossuet for spiritual discipline. Imprisoned for

and however some may affect to despise our modern mysticks, I consider them to be just Platonick philosophers, examining into the state of their souls, refining themselves from material substance, and endeavouring to approach nearer and nearer to the fountain of all good. That spirituality has been debased in some instances is no more an argument against vital Religion in general, than that there has been doggrel is an argument against poetry.

Life being to the most fortunate, a mixed scene of happiness and misery, and to many, a scene of weariness and woe, especially in an advanced age, it is of much importance to us to have Religion as a comfort. Dr. Johnson, in his "Vanity of Human Wishes," after shewing with masterly truth of observation, the wretchedness of all earthly pursuits, has the following grand effusion of philosophical poetry:

Where then shall hope and fear their objects find?  
 Shall dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?  
 Must helpless man in ignorance sedate  
 Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?  
 Shall no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
 No cries attempt the mercy of the skies?  
 Enthusiast cease. Petitions yet remain  
 Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem Religion vain.<sup>11</sup>

Surely the comfort which a religious man has in distress must be allowed to make his situation more desireable than that of an unbeliever; and in this view alone which of the two characters is best entitled to think itself superiour to the other is obvious to the eye of wisdom. The "evidences of Religion" are given by several excellent writers,<sup>12</sup> and I really think are such as must satisfy every

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a time in the Bastille, she was released on condition that she live in retirement on her son's estate under the surveillance of the church. The complete edition of her works, including a somewhat hysterical and fragmentary "autobiography" and five volumes of letters, amounts to forty volumes (1767-1791).

For other "modern mysticks" whom Boswell admired, see his remarks on Quakers (*Life of J.*, 1. 535; 2. 524; 4. 137, 243; *Hyp.* 3, 60).

<sup>11</sup> Boswell misquotes from memory; the penultimate lines of the passage should be

No cries invoke the mercies of the skies?  
*Inquirer* cease.

<sup>12</sup> Among them Dr. Samuel Clarke, whose *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion* appeared in 1705, Soame Jenyns (see *Hyp.* 3, 22), Grotius (see *Hyp.*

candid mind upon an attentive study of them. Nor can I lay out of my consideration the weight of authority which we have by so many able and impartial men being convinced.<sup>13</sup> That other able men have not been convinced is not of equal weight; for, it is a just maxim in the *law of evidence*, that one positive witness will counterbalance many negatives; and besides I cannot believe that those who have not been convinced were as impartial as those who have. All of us, and particularly Hypochondriacks, should resolve not to despair in gloomy seasons, because after a long lapse of time, and many alterations which we have experienced in many respects, the reality of a future state does not yet seem clearer and stronger. Let us consider we are still in life as much as ever; and that it is not till we have passed beyond death, that we can be sensible of the great change. In making a long voyage to a distant country which we long to reach, we perceive no difference at all as to our prospect of land, even after the greatest part of the voyage is over. We are still in the ocean, and we must wait with patience till a near approach shall bless us with the immediate sight of safety and enjoyment.

In the meantime, we may "have peace and joy in believing,"<sup>14</sup> we may have what is esteemed to be most pleasing in this state of existence—Hope! and what is peculiar to the hope of a religious man, it lasts as long as he lives. But it is as necessary to cultivate the *religious taste*,<sup>15</sup> as the taste of any of the fine arts if we would

61), and Addison. Boswell endeavored to set Johnson at work on the theme, mentioning these last two as examples to urge him (*Hebr.*, 101).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, I. 526:

JOHNSON. ". . . As to the Christian religion, Sir, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth, after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a very firm believer."

Cf. *Hyp.* 15 n. 14 for an example of the lengths to which a desire for "rational proofs" of religious truths could go.

<sup>14</sup> Boswell paraphrases *Rom.*, 15. 13—"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

<sup>15</sup> Only a slight exaggeration of the typical eighteenth-century esthetics; cf. the equally characteristic dependence upon reason and logic, note 12 above. Boswell was perhaps influenced to this curious paradox by his revolt against his upbringing in Scotland, where, in his opinion, religion was narrow and gloomy,

have the exquisite pleasure which it yields to the heavenly minded. Retirement, devotional reading, meditation, and prayer, if frequent and habitual, can scarcely fail to obtain for us that happiness.

I shall conclude this subject with some beautiful verses from Parnell's *Hymn to Contentment* which has a soft miniature resemblance to the "Vanity of Human Wishes."<sup>16</sup> For after trying in vain to find<sup>17</sup> contentment in various scenes, he introduces the Grace herself declaring that it is with Religion only she is to be found.

Know GOD—and bring thy heart to know  
The joys which from Religion flow:  
Then every grace shall prove its guest,  
And I'll be there to crown the rest.

Oh! by yonder mossy seat,  
In my hours of sweet retreat;  
Might I thus my soul employ,  
With sense of gratitude and joy;  
Rais'd as ancient prophets were,  
In heavenly vision, praise, and prayer,  
Pleasing all men, hurting none,  
Pleas'd and bless'd with God alone.

Go search among your idle dreams,  
Your busy or your vain extremes,  
And find a life of equal bliss  
Or own the next begun in this.

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and taste was absent. See his prologue to Jones's *Earl of Essex*, quoted in *Letters of B.*, 1. 199 n. 3:

While in all points with other lands she vied,  
The Stage alone to Scotland was denied. . . .  
Taste and Religion were supposed at strife,  
And 'twas a sin—to view this glass of life!

<sup>16</sup> These poems are grouped together again in a letter from Boswell to Johnson (*Letters of B.*, 1. 221): "In your *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and in Parnell's *Contentment*, I find the only sure means of enjoying happiness; or, at least, the hopes of happiness." See also *ibid.*, 2. 371, and *Hyp.* 4.

Boswell omits to note that a number of lines separate the last four lines he quotes, from what precedes.

<sup>17</sup> Originally, *bring*; corrected by a note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 56.

No. LVI. May 1782.

## [ON PENURIOUSNESS &amp; WEALTH]

οὐ γὰρ εἰ μὴ χρήματ' ἀπόλλυτε, μόνον σκεπτέον, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ δόξαν χρηστήν, περὶ ἣς μᾶλλον σπουδάζετ' ἢ περὶ χρημάτων.

—DEMOSTHENES *Advers. Lept.*<sup>1</sup>

“For you should not be anxious, only that you may not lose your wealth.

“But you should be careful of your reputation, which is more to be “valued than wealth.”

WHAT Demosthenes in the motto to this paper inculcated upon the Athenian nation, may with propriety and advantage be given as counsel to many individuals, for he who prefers riches to a good name, though he may actually pride himself in the contemplation of his money, notwithstanding the hisses of the multitude, as Horace represents, is indeed essentially unwise.<sup>2</sup>

It may, however, be questioned if there is not too violent, and undistinguishing a prejudice in the generality of mankind, against the character of a very frugal or a very saving man. We are too apt to confound it with greediness or rapacity, though it is certain they are clearly different, and may be as frequently found separate as united. A man may be as Sallust describes Catiline “*Alieni appetens sui profusus*. Covetous of what belongs to others, profuse of what he himself has;”<sup>3</sup> and on the other hand, a penurious man may be only careful of his own, without grasping at the property of his neighbours.

Penuriousness may no doubt grow to such an excess that the person in whom it predominates may be despicable and offensive. If he denies himself every comfort in life merely from the motive of saving his money, and though he is rich will not contribute to the relief of the distressed, he will with justice be so stigmatised.

<sup>1</sup> *Adversus Leptinen*. The abbreviation was originally printed *Sept.*, and left uncorrected by Boswell. Errors in the Greek of the magazine text, also left uncorrected by Boswell, were as follows: accents were omitted from γὰρ, μόνον, περὶ, μᾶλλον, and οὐ was given for οὐ; ἐι for εἰ; χρήματα for χρήματ'; ἀπόλλυτε for ἀπόλλυτε; ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ for ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ; ἣς for ἣς; σπουδάζετε for σπουδάζετ'; χρήματων for χρημάτων.

<sup>2</sup> *Sat.*, I. I. 64. The passage which Boswell quotes below, *Tantalus a labris sitiens*, occurs directly after these lines.

<sup>3</sup> *Bellum Catil.*, 5.

Such a degree of penuriousness is a disease; and one affected by it is significantly termed in English, a *miser*, for he is truly a miserable wretch.<sup>4</sup> His state is altogether unnatural, and he never can be easy. The late Earl Marischal of Scotland<sup>5</sup> told me of a miser who kept his money in a vault, locked in an iron chest, upon which he sat all night, with a loaded gun in his hand, to watch against thieves. This was living in torment; and it is with an excellence of justness that Horace assimilates such a man, to the Tantalus of Mythology:

*Tantalus a labris sitiens fugientia captat  
Flumina. Quid rides? Mutato nomine de te  
Fabula narratur, congestis undique saccis,  
Indormis inhias, et tamquam parcere sacris,  
Cogeris aut pietis tanquam gaudere labellis.*

The Hypochondriack will presume to give his readers a translation of this passage, which he made when a boy at fifteen. It is a curiosity to himself as well as to them, and full allowance will be made for its imperfections:

The thirsty Tantalus at the streams does catch,  
Which shun his touch, and still are out of reach.  
Thou fool, what makes thee laugh? Change but the name,  
And thou wilt find thy character the same,

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 366:

JOHNSON. "All the world . . . . have called an avaricious man a *miser* because he is miserable."

<sup>5</sup> George Keith, tenth Earl Marischal (1693?–1778), a stout Jacobite, with manners formed by his various experiences in Scotland, Spain, and Germany, was one of Boswell's chief patrons at the time of his European tour. He had taken warm part in various intrigues to restore the Stuarts to the English throne, and was outlawed as a result. Introduced to favor in Prussia by his younger brother Francis, who was field marshal to Frederick the Great, Keith became ambassador from Prussia to Paris and to Spain, and was finally made Governor of Neuchâtel. Through the influence of Frederick also, he received a pardon from George II, and returned in 1760–1761 to enjoy his estates. Frederick insisted on his return to Potsdam, and made him comfortable by a truly cherishing friendship; in the course of it the Earl interceded for the King with the disgusted Voltaire, and on account of his own sprightly charm, even in old age, received enthusiastic encomiums from Rousseau and Casanova. Boswell met Rousseau and Voltaire by means of letters introductory from Milord Marischal,

Thou sleepless still yawn'st o'er huge heaps of gold,  
 Which every day thou carefully hast told;  
 And think'st it sacrilege to spend a groat;  
 Judge, then, if Tantalus you resemble not?<sup>6</sup>

It appears to me, notwithstanding the exquisite merit of *Moliere*, that the distresses of a miser are not the proper subject of comedy, which though it may lash faults with smartness, and expose them to ridicule, is not to excite abhorrence, or to exhibit anguish in any character. This is the principle of Aristotle himself in his Poeticks. He limits comedy in this respect, to what is contemptible, “τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστι τὸ γελοῖον μόριον, the laughable part of what is base;” and he says it must be “ἀνώδυνον, without pain.”<sup>6a</sup> Now I declare, I could not laugh at many of the scenes of the Miser when I have seen them acted; for the unhappy man, though the circumstances were ludicrous, was suffering severe pain. That he ought not in *reason* to be in pain, and that his unhappiness is owing to a perversion of his understanding, will not answer the objection upon the principle which has been stated, and which every humane man must approve. A madman may be in terror from disturbed imagination. We may see he has no reason for it. But it would be cruel to laugh at him.

There is a character which is to be found in real life, but which I do not remember to have seen upon the stage, or in any dramatic piece; yet it would be a choice morsel for any good comic writer. It is a character compounded of two qualities, each of which may be the foundation of ridicule. I mean a man who is at once narrow

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and—possibly by way of gratitude—planned to name one of his illegitimate children after the old gentleman (*Letters of B.*, I. 135).

<sup>6</sup> *Sat.*, I. I, 68 ff. In the penultimate line of the Latin quotation, *inhias* should be *inhians*; Boswell's verse translates the error (yawn'st) rather than the proper term, so the mistake is not typographical. It is amusing to speculate upon this deviation from classical correctness, which had persisted in Boswell's memory for twenty-seven years. Perhaps it was originally caused by too hasty memorizing for a not too exigent master, and it no doubt became fixed in Boswell's mind because of the boyish translation which embodied it.

<sup>6a</sup> In the Greek of this passage, the magazine text omitted τὸ, and gave αἰσχροῦ for αἰσχροῦ, and ἀνώδυνον for ἀνώδυνον. Boswell made no corrections.

and vain.<sup>7</sup> The struggle between these two opposite passions, exemplified in variety of incidents, would be exceedingly diverting in the theatre. To observe ostentation drawing him forth, and penuriousness pulling him back. To see a splendid table set out with studied arrangement, and the master of the house in tremor lest a china plate, or a drinking glass should be broke. To hear

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout this essay Boswell is drawing from life, but his models are so deftly run together that he produces a type of penurious man rather than a portrait, and it is difficult to guess who may have been uppermost in his thoughts. It may have been Sir Alexander Macdonald of Sky, who was the subject of so much criticism for his narrow habits (*Hebr.*, 168 n. 3, 179 n. 2, 317, 358 ff.), and whom Boswell and Johnson both declared subject for comedy in terms comparable to this essay (*ibid.*, 315):

[Johnson] observed that he exceeded *L'Avare* in the play. I concurred with him, and remarked that he would do well, if introduced in one of Foote's farces; that the best way to get it done, would be to bring Foote to be entertained at his house for a week, and then it would be *facit indignatio*.

Garrick may have been chief model; many of the instances through this and the following essay compare very closely to remarks about Garrick recorded in the *Life of J.*, and one conversation of 1778, beginning in the discussion of Garrick's expenditures and proceeding to a general discussion of economy, follows the same course as that pursued by Boswell in these *Hypochondriacks* (*Life of J.*, 3. 300):

JOHNSON. “[Garrick] has given away more money than any man in England. There may be a little vanity mixed; but he has shewn, that money is not his first object.” BOSWELL. “Yet Foote used to say of him, that he walked out with an intention to do a generous action; but turning the corner of a street, he met with the ghost of a halfpenny, which frightened him.” JOHNSON. “Why, Sir, that is very true, too; for I never knew a man of whom it could be said with less certainty to-day, what he will do to-morrow, than Garrick. . . .” SCOTT. “I am glad to hear of his liberality. He has been represented as very saving.” JOHNSON. “With his domestic savings we have nothing to do. I remember drinking tea with him long ago, when Peg Woffington made it, and he grumbled at her for making it too strong. He had then begun to feel money in his purse, and did not know when he should have enough of it.”

Foote loved to tell stories of Garrick's saving, in combat with his love of ostentation; one apposite to Boswell's discussion occurs in Rogers's *Table-Talk*, 102:

“Garrick,” said Foote, “lately invited Hurd to dine with him in the Adelphi; and after dinner, the evening being very warm, they walked up and down in front of the house. As they passed and repassed the dining-room windows, Garrick was in perfect agony; for he saw that there was a thief in one of the candles which were burning on the table; and yet Hurd was a person of such consequence that he could not run away from him to prevent the waste of his tallow.”

The parallels between the essays and conversations in the *Life* regarding Bennet Langton are equally numerous, and if anything a little stronger than those regarding Garrick.

It is certain also that Boswell is thinking of his own faults, in writing these passages. His jests in this essay about the man who is at once showy and penurious come to a point in *Hyp.* 57, where he reproduces a *bon mot* upon his own love

him pressing his guests to partake heartily of what is before them, while he is anxious to cover the retreat of some untouched principal dish, which may be served up again; or is making some fantastical pretense to have the rarest and most valuable fruits in his desert carried away, as he has already had the glory of their being seen by the company, who, he flatters himself, will talk of them all over the town.

I have heard it remarked by one, of whom more remarks deserve to be remembered, than of any person I ever knew—that a man is often as<sup>8</sup> narrow as he is prodigal, for want of counting.

of money from *Boswelliana*, 291; he frankly admitted to his friends that he had a “passion for gold” (*Letters of B.*, 1. 165), and was “occasionally troubled by a fit of narrowness” (*Life of J.*, 4. 220; *Letters of B.*, 1. 25); and all his life he was in debt because of extravagance (*Letters of B.*, 2. 301, 304, 307, 327, 329, 352, 367, 380, 384, 413, 416, 421, 432, 445). Very possibly this and the two following essays were inspired by the series of letters written to him by Johnson in 1782, the year in which these papers were published; the arguments in favor of wealth and against extravagance are strongly reminiscent of Johnsonian counsel. The essays were printed in issues of the London Magazine dated May, June, July, 1782; the letters were dated March 28 and June 3, 1782 (followed by others of September 7 and December 7). The apparent discrepancy of dates is explained by the fact that the London Magazine dated its issues at least a month earlier than their actual appearance (cf. *Hyp.* 1 n. 1).

<sup>8</sup> A note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 57 directs, “dele as.” The person alluded to here is certainly Johnson (cf. note 19 below). The remark quoted may have been made concerning the Duke of Argyle, who was unnecessarily “narrow in his ordinary expences, in his quotidian expences” (*Hebr.*, 393–94). It may have accompanied one of the allusions to Garrick; Johnson more than once excused his fitfulness in expenditure by saying that his early poverty made him incapable of judging how to spend (see n. 7 above, and *Life of J.*, 3. 81, 440). Most likely the remark concerned Bennet Langton, the Greek scholar, who was usually the theme of such discussions in the Johnsonian circle. The strongest expressions concerning him parallel this allusion in the essay:

I told him that at a gentleman’s house where there was thought to be such extravagance or bad management that he was living much beyond his income, his lady objected to the cutting of a pickled mango, and that I had taken an opportunity to ask the price of it, and found it was only two shillings; so here was a very poor saving. JOHNSON. “Sir, that is the blundering economy of a narrow understanding. It is stopping one hole in a sieve.” (*Life of J.*, 3. 341.)

(Johnson to Boswell) “—— has gone to his regiment. He has laid down his coach and talks of making more contractions of his expence: how he will succeed I know not. It is difficult to reform a household gradually; it may be better done by a system totally new. . . . What I told him of the encreasing expence of a growing family seems to have struck him. He certainly has gone on with very confused views, and we have, I think, shewn him that he

And hence comes the proverb "penny wise, and pound foolish." Were the prodigal seriously to sit down, and make a calculation in how short a time his course of expence will run out his fortune, and leave him exposed to indigence, he would be more moderate. And were some narrow men to compute the sum total that it is possible for them to save in trifles, and, at the same time, to consider the meanness of character, which such saving infallibly establishes, they would avoid it with disdain. There have been instances of paltry narrowness, which are almost incredible. Perhaps, every man is narrow in something. Men abundantly liberal in general, have been niggards in cheese, or candles, or paper, or some such things, which they have been used in early life to save. A nobleman who had acquired a large fortune, and lived magnificently, would not trust the key of the corn for the horses to any of his servants, but kept it himself.

Avarice or covetousness, which should ever be odious because it is hostile, should be distinguished from saving or penuriousness; and penuriousness is of two kinds, which I would call the malignant, and the mild. The malignant is when a man saves off<sup>9</sup> other

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was wrong; though, with the common deficiency of advisers, we have not shewn him how to do right." (*Ibid.*, 3. 412.)

See note 18 below; *Life of J.*, 3. 46, 56, 107, 145, 211, 359; and the letter from Johnson to Langton himself, 4. 417:

Of the money which you mentioned, I have no immediate need; keep it, however, for me, unless some exigence requires it. . . . I am a little angry at you for not keeping minutes of your own *acceptum et expensum*, and think a little time might be spared from Aristophanes, for the *res familiares*.

Cf. Lord Chesterfield's criticism of another eighteenth-century gentleman (*Letters to his Son*, 2. 207):

The Duke of Marlborough [and fourth Earl of Sunderland, d. 1758] did by no means spend, but he slatterned himself into that immense debt, which is not yet near paid off.

<sup>9</sup> Originally, *of*; corrected by a note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 57. This distinction between two types of narrowness, with the paragraph following, is paralleled by a conversation of 1778 (*Life of J.*, 3. 366):

It was observed, that avarice was inherent in some dispositions. JOHNSON. "No man was born a miser, because no man was born to possession. Every man is born *cupidus*—desirous of getting; but not *avarus*—desirous of keeping." BOSWELL. "I have heard old Mr. Sheridan maintain, with much ingenuity, that a complete miser is a happy man; a miser who gives himself wholly to the one passion of saving." JOHNSON. "That is flying in the face of all the world. . . . No, Sir; a man who both spends and saves money is the happiest man, because he has both enjoyments."

See also *ibid.*, 4. 199, on hoarding.

people; for instance by ordering a piece of work to be done, or something to be furnished to him, and not paying what is fair and reasonable. The mild is when a man chooses to do without things which he no doubt might command, did he not rather choose to save what they would cost.

It is the malignant species which chiefly occasions loss of reputation; for they who are positively hurt by a man's narrowness, will naturally rail against him. The mild species, being only negative, will not produce much reproach unless it be excessive indeed.

The character of a penurious man should not, by any means, be so much the object of reproach in an advanced state of society as at an early period. In old times, penurious men had hoards secreted, and consequently altogether useless to others. Their money was literally "*abdita terris, hid in the earth.*"<sup>10</sup> Whereas now, when commerce is so universal, and money, by means of interest and certain modes of security, is willingly sent into the community, "*Splendeat usu, it shines in use*" as much as if its owner spent it himself; and thus society is equally benefited by the wealth of the saving man, as by that of the prodigal.

I am most willing to allow that we ought not to set our hearts too much on any thing in this world. But I confess I do not see a sufficient argument why it should be worse to be fond of money, than of other things. It is our duty to do good to others. But we are as much hindered from that, by dissipating our money in expensive pleasures, or laying it out in elegant amusements, or even in the cultivation of taste and learning, as by saving it. It is the same thing to those who are disappointed of our charity, whether our money is intercepted by the minions<sup>11</sup> of extravagance, or the negociators of loans; whether it is transferred into pictures or books, or downright vulgar bonds. Indeed, in the latter cases they may have more hope of obtaining some share of it, as the operation is more simple, and the transition shorter.

I repeat it, that I do not mean to defend absolute devotion to wealth, so as that a man should, like the licentiate in the Preface to *Gil Blas*, make it his *soul*. But I do maintain, that a money-

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Horace, *Carm.*, 2. 2. 2. *Splendeat usu*, quoted below, occurs in the fourth line of the same poem.

<sup>11</sup> Originally, *opinions*; corrected by a note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 57. Cf. the end of *Hyp.* 57 for a parallel to this passage.

saver (for I would avoid the odious term miser) is not worse than other worldly-minded men, under which description I include the ambitious, the vain, the gay, the men<sup>12</sup> of pleasure of every sort. He is free from many vices which accompany prodigality. Considering merely temporal pleasure, or satisfaction confined to this life, a man may freely choose for himself, and if he thinks it more agreeable to save his money, than to have what it can purchase, he has a right to save it. It was sensibly and liberally said, by an old money-saving father, when twitted with the prospect that his son would dissipate all his wealth, "If he has as much pleasure in spending it as I had in saving it, I shall be very glad."<sup>13</sup> Thus the wealth of the money-saver has the advantage that it serves at least two generations, supposing his immediate successor to be a spend-thrift; whereas the wealth of one of a different character is gone at once. The pleasure of saving too is the most certain of any. A man may be dubious of his fame; he may be jealous of the woman he loves. But if he has common prudence, he may be absolutely certain of his wealth. His pleasure also is always augmenting. "*Crescit amor nummi quantum ipsa pecunia crescit.* His love for his money grows stronger in proportion as his money increases," and to the last hour of his life, his attachment is permanent.<sup>14</sup> I was struck one day, with a sally of a learned and ingenious friend of mine upon this subject. The love of money

<sup>12</sup> Originally, *man*; corrected by a note at the end of *Hyp.* 57. Cf. *Life of J.*, 2. 369:

Mr. Strahan put Johnson in mind of a remark which he had made to him; "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money."

See also Johnson's comment on Garrick (*ibid.*, 3. 81):

"I am of opinion, the reputation of avarice which he has had, has been very lucky for him, and prevented his having many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been much better attacked for living with more splendour than is suitable to a player: if they had had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamouring about his avarice, which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy."

<sup>13</sup> The anecdote appears in Swift's *A Critical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind* (*Works*, 9. 128):

How different was [the philosopher who flung his money into the sea] from the usurer, who, being told his son would spend all he had got, replied, "He cannot take more pleasure in spending, than I did in getting it."

<sup>14</sup> Juvenal, 14. 139; quoted also in Boswell's *Letters*, 2. 294. The learned and ingenious friend whom Boswell proceeds to quote on the subject may have

said he, is kindly given us in old age, to sooth and amuse us when other passions fail.

Some men have alternate fits of narrowness and prodigality, and they, like all other inconsistent characters, can neither be easy in themselves, or esteemed by others. And many who have a strong passion for saving, are from a false shame, or cowardly dread of the world, perpetually endeavouring to disguise it. They are still more uneasy and contemptible. But let a man avoid indecent sordidness, let him be just to every body, and charitable when occasions offer; let him but accumulate all that might be wasted from negligence, or spent for pleasure and vanity, in which views I should think it indisputable, that saving cannot be more culpable than spending, but only more wise, and let him honestly and boldly avow himself to be a money-saver, and persist in it with uniformity—I will venture to assure him, that instead of being despised, he will be treated with general attention and respect.<sup>15</sup>

I do not regard the common place objection to the love of money, that it is in itself nothing, that it is merely “shining ore”<sup>16</sup> which has an imaginary value, artificially ascribed to it by common consent. I know well that every thing in life may be analyzed into nothing. I take things as they are; as we feel them in civilized society, and cannot help feeling them. I know that abstractly there is no inherent value in money. But in effect there is great value. I also know how little any individual can actually enjoy

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been Johnson, but more likely it was William Temple or Sir Alexander Dick, both of whom were aware of Boswell's love of money; see *Letters of B.*, 1. 25, 165.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 57, and the letter from Johnson to Boswell (*Life of J.*, 4. 171–72), from which perhaps Boswell derived his phrase, *spent for pleasure and vanity*:

I am sorry to find, what your solicitation seems to imply, that you have already gone the whole length of your credit. This is to set the quiet of your life at hazard. If you anticipate your inheritance, you can at last inherit nothing; all that you receive must pay for the past. You must get a place, or pine in penury, with the empty name of a great estate. Poverty, my dear friend, is so great an evil, and pregnant with so much temptation, and so much misery, that I cannot but earnestly enjoin you to avoid it. Live on what you have; live if you can on less; do not borrow either for vanity or pleasure; the vanity will end in shame, and the pleasure in regret.

See also the sensible advice of the following letters (*ibid.*, 4. 175, 178, 180). Contrast to this the opinions cited in notes 18 and 20, below.

<sup>16</sup> Phrase translated from the *Amores* of Baudius which Boswell uses as the motto to his next paper. It is quoted also in *Letters of B.*, 2. 314.

wealth in his own person more than another. But the consciousness of *power*, which belongs to wealth, fills the imagination, and therefore it is that without having recourse to folly to account for it, a man of great wealth thinks highly of himself, and is highly thought of by others; and there is reason for this, and will be reason while society is constituted as we now find it.<sup>17</sup>

If then ambition may be indulged at all, why not indulge the ambition of acquiring great wealth, and the surest mode of acquiring it is by saving. There is a grandeur in the idea of accumulation of fortune, and a meanness in the idea of its mouldering away.<sup>18</sup> I heard it said by a great judge of men and things, "of

<sup>17</sup> For the analysis which reduces all things to nothing, especially when it concerns money, see the conversation of 1763 on the power of wealth in civilized society (*Life of J.*, I. 509):

JOHNSON. ". . . Now, Sir, in civilized society, external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one. Sir, you may analyse this, and say what is there in it? But that will avail you nothing, for it is a part of a general system. Pound St. Paul's Church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing: but, put all these atoms together, and you have St. Paul's Church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shewn to be very insignificant. In civilized society, personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street, and give one man a lecture on morality, and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most. If you wish only to support nature, Sir William Petty fixes your allowance at three pounds a year; but as times are much altered, let us call it six pounds. This sum will fill your belly, shelter you from the weather, and even get you a strong lasting coat, supposing it to be made of good bull's hide. Now, Sir, all beyond this is artificial, and is desired in order to obtain a greater degree of respect from our fellow-creatures. And, Sir, if six hundred pounds a year procure a man more consequence, and, of course, more happiness than six pounds a year, the same proportion will hold as to six thousand, and so on as far as opulence can be carried. Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one; but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune: for, *ceteris paribus*, he who is rich in a civilized society, must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used, (and it is a man's own fault if they are not,) must be productive of the highest advantages."

For the contrasting argument that land or family is the only true source of self-confidence and satisfaction, see Johnson's remarks quoted in *Hyp.* 57 n. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the comments on Langton's affairs in 1778:

JOHNSON. "Wasting a fortune is evaporation by a thousand imperceptible means. If it were a stream, they'd stop it. You must speak to him. It is really miserable. Were he a gamester, it could be said he had hopes of winning. Were he a bankrupt in trade, he might have grown rich; but he has neither spirit to spend nor resolution to spare. He does not spend fast enough to have pleasure from it. He has the crime of prodigality and the wretchedness of parsimony. If a man is killed in a duel, he is killed as many a one has been killed; but it is a sad thing for a man to lie down and die; to bleed to death, because he has not fortitude enough to sear the wound, or even to stitch it up." (*Life of J.*, 3. 361.)

He said of one of our friends, "He is ruining himself without pleasure. A man who loses at play, or who runs out his fortune at court, makes his estate less, in hopes of making it

two men driving through Temple-Bar, one to lend, and the other to borrow ten thousand pounds, you must have a greater respect for the first.”<sup>19</sup> The many circumstances which associate themselves in the imagination with the idea of great wealth, as its concomitants, cannot fail to give it elevation. The pleasures which it may command; the patronage of arts and sciences and learning; the relief of the indigent, and being blest by every eye, like Job in his prosperity; the immediate distinction of one’s own children, and the grandeur of posterity.<sup>20</sup>

bigger: . . . . but it is a sad thing to pass through the quagmire of parsimony, to the gulph of ruin. To pass over the flowery path of extravagance is very well.” (*Ibid.*, 3. 396.)

See also *ibid.*, 3. 252.

<sup>19</sup> The person here alluded to is certainly Johnson; the characteristic quotation is found nowhere else. I suspect it to be a recollected bit from the conversation of 1763, quoted in note 17 above; probably it does not appear in the *Life* because Boswell had it in his memory only, not in his journal, and hence considered it not sufficiently *authentick*. See also note 8 above.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 57, 58; *The Spectator*, 150, 346; *The Adventurer*, 34—“Opulence and splendour can practise benevolence and dry the tears of all around.” In 1772 Boswell asked Johnson what he considered proper uses of wealth, asking specifically for his opinion on hospitality and on educating young men (*Life of J.*, 2. 192). Johnson was feeling flippant that day, and chose to speak of politics and greenhouses; in 1777 he was more serious (*Life of J.*, 3. 204):

I mentioned to him a saying . . . . of an American savage, who, when an European was expatiating on all the advantages of money, put this question: “Will it purchase occupation?” JOHNSON. “Depend upon it, Sir, this saying is too refined for a savage. And, Sir, money *will* purchase occupation; it *will* purchase all the conveniences of life; it *will* purchase variety of company; it *will* purchase all sorts of entertainment.”

See also the letter of June 3, 1782 (*ibid.*, 4. 175):

Consider a man whose fortune is very narrow; whatever be his rank by birth, or whatever his reputation by intellectual excellence, what good can he do? or what evil can he prevent? That he cannot help the needy is evident; he has nothing to spare. But, perhaps, his advice or admonition may be useful. His poverty will destroy his influence: many more can find that he is poor, than that he is wise; and few will reverence the understanding that is of so little advantage to its owner. I say nothing of the personal wretchedness of the debtor. . . . Of riches, it is not necessary to write the praise. Let it, however, be remembered, that he who has money to spare, has it always in his power to benefit others; and of such power the good man must always be desirous.

The later letters of 1782 repeat the thought more generally (*ibid.*, 4. 178, 180). See also *ibid.*, 2. 403, 491; 3. 201, 223, 283; *Hebr.*, 68. Johnson’s opinion that the spending of money was better than the indiscriminate giving of alms (the subject on which Mandeville had “opened his views into real life very much”) is expressed in *Life of J.*, 3. 65, 331 ff.; 4. 199.

Contrast to all of these statements, Johnson’s criticisms of great wealth as one

The occupation which great wealth affords, is a valuable privilege. The certain proof which a rich<sup>21</sup> man may have of his own humanity, and generosity is delightful. One may even have a very considerable enjoyment from wealth without diminishing it. If it be judiciously lent out in his neighbourhood, a rich man has all around him, under a certain degree of obligation to him. For few men borrow what they can conveniently repay on demand,<sup>22</sup> and therefore, the wise man says “the borrower is the servant to the lender.”<sup>23</sup> By being a gentle creditor, a rich man may have all the homage which is willingly paid to power mildly used. Enough has been said for wealth.—In short, the Hypochondriack is resolved to be rich.

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form of dangerous excess, quoted in *Hyp.* 4 n. 3. Boswell was confirmed in good opinions of wealth, however, by his wife, who when he repeated to her Johnson's observation that wealth excluded nothing but poverty, replied, “It is true, all this excludes only one evil; but how much good does it let in?” Boswell proudly adds, “To this observation much praise has been justly given” (*Life of J.*, 3. 182 n. 1).

<sup>21</sup> *Rich* is inserted by the direction of a note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 57.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Hebr.*, 128–29, in which the phrasing of Boswell's own reflections is closely parallel to this paragraph:

JOHNSON. “Why, Sir, Lowther, by keeping his money, had the command of the county, which the family has now lost, by spending it; I take it, he lent a great deal; and that is the way to have influence, and yet preserve one's wealth. A man may lend his money upon very good security, and yet have his debtor under his power.” BOSWELL. “No doubt, Sir. He can always distress him for the money; as no man borrows, who is able to pay on demand quite conveniently.”

See also *Life of J.*, 2. 192; 4. 257. The letters of 1782 emphasize the danger of debt, especially that of September 7 (*ibid.*, 4. 178).

<sup>23</sup> *Prov.*, 22. 7.

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[ON PENURIOUSNESS & WEALTH—*Continued*]

*Qui præter auri laminam refulgentem  
Nulla expetenda dona dicit in vita.*—BAUDII *Amores.*<sup>1</sup>

“Who for the joy of life desires no more  
“Than of effulgent gold a plenteous store.”

**RICHES**, of which my last number treated, and which the ancients deemed to be of such consequence as to have a peculiar God in their synod of divinities, might be the subject of many papers. My readers then, I hope, will not think me dull or tedious, when I now offer them some more reflections upon the same topick.

The passion for wealth cannot subsist but in a state of society highly improved; for there is not scope for its operation in simple society; so that it marks the advancement of human nature as certainly, though not in so shocking a manner, as a circumstance which a gentleman of much original observation once pointed out, when travelling in a rich part of England, upon seeing a man hanging in chains on one side of the road, “Aye (said he) we are now in a civilized country.”<sup>2</sup>

The effects of wealth may be absolutely defeated, if the “*ars fruendi*—the art of enjoying it,”<sup>3</sup> be altogether wanting. If there be more sordidness or more rapacity in a rich man’s character than

<sup>1</sup> Dominique Baudier, or Baudius (1561–1613), by profession a lawyer, by taste a poet and diplomat, was born French, but became a citizen of Leyden. Ambassador to the court of Elizabeth in 1585, he met Sidney there. He was especially noted for his Latin poems, chiefly in praise of the mighty men of Holland. A hint of his popularity appears in the fact that, although his *Amores* composed only a slight part of the volume of erotica published by Scriverius in Amsterdam in 1638, the whole collection was issued under his name. Boswell alludes to this passage in *Hyp.* 56.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly an exhibition of the “romantic humours” of Dr. Robertson, author of the *History of America* which Boswell quotes in *Hyp.* 32. Dr. Alexander Carlyle mentions Robertson’s horror of the hardened man who could coolly inspect a body hanging on the gallows (Birkbeck Hill’s note, *Life of J.*, 3. 381 n. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Horace, *Epist.*, 1. 4. 7. For the general content of these paragraphs, cf. *Hyp.* 56 and notes.

will counterbalance the respect which the contemplation of his means of power and benevolence naturally produce, he will be as much despised as a poor man, and hated besides. Of this we have seen so many instances, that it must be allowed the effects of wealth are not uniform and universal.

There are men, on whom I have touched in my last number, who have a kind of aguish disposition as to money. They will anxiously save for a long time, then commission expensive articles, and afterwards be miserable, when they reflect how they have entangled themselves. They will make genteel presents, and then repent of what they have done. In short, according to the common strong expression, they are at war with themselves, and are objects of pity.<sup>4</sup> I am particularly sorry when I see a giver of presents suffering uneasiness from it; for I know nothing in which better œconomy may be displayed, nothing where more value in kind remembrance may be had for one's money, than a judicious distribution of presents. A silver salver, or drinking cup, which has not cost many pounds, has been the palladium of friendship between families for ages; and a book, or a ring, or some other trinket of small cost, has served to animate and keep fresh, in distant situations, the mutual affectionate regard of individuals.

The pain of parting with money, when there is a settled passion for saving it, is very intense, and therefore I do not think the simile of distress in the parting of Macheath and Polly,

"The miser thus a shilling sees,  
"Which he's oblig'd to pay,"<sup>5</sup>

is justly liable to the censure of being too ludicrous for the subject. The grief at parting of a highwayman and his mistress, or indeed of any other two lovers, will itself seem rather ludicrous to people who are not at all in love at the time; for, as Smith ingeniously observes, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, we do not

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Hebr.*, 358:

Dr. Johnson said, I ought to write down a collection of instances of Sir Alexander Macdonald's narrowness, as they almost exceeded belief. Col told us, that O'Kane, the famous Irish harper, was once at that gentleman's house. He could not find in his heart to give him any money, but gave him a key for a harp, which was finely ornamented with gold and silver, and with a precious stone, and was worth eighty or a hundred guineas. He did not know the value of it; and when he came to know it, he would fain have had it back; but O'Kane took care that he should not.

<sup>5</sup> *Beggar's Opera*, I. 13, Air 18.

sympathise with the over-heated feelings of those who are in love. It has occurred to me, that if a saving man is obliged to part with money, it is easier for him to part with a large sum all at once than with many small sums at intervals. There is but one pain in the first case; whereas in the second, he is as it were torn piecemeal. It is easier to have a tooth pulled out entire than that it should break in the operation, and be drawn in ragged fragments, and sharp splinters.<sup>6</sup> This thought was confirmed to me the other day by hearing a gentleman of some talents declare, that he had completed the building of an expensive new house in a short time, because he loved money, and he felt the giving it away to be so uneasy to him, that he resolved to be rid of the pain as soon as possible.

The delusions of imagination are not more whimsical in any thing than in the passion of saving; and it ought to be our study by a vigorous exertion of reason to correct them. A deep Hypochondria has made many rich persons apprehend, with extreme distress, that they were to die beggars, and smaller absurd effects may be observed in a variety of instances. Thus a man will give a draught on his banker with all imaginable ease, but will hold hard cash with an eager gripe. To illustrate this, there is a remarkable story of a noble duke, which I believe to be true. His nurse having come to visit him, he resolved to make her a present of ten guineas, and was sitting down to write an order to his steward to pay her that sum, when it was suggested that the poor woman would take it as a much higher mark of regard to receive the money from his Grace's own hand. The ten guineas were accordingly brought to the duke. But when he saw the shining pieces, and touched the gold itself, he could not think of parting with so much; and he was observed to steal five of the guineas into his own pocket, and give his nurse only the half of what he had intended. Such a perversity as this may certainly be cured, as may narrowness and prodigality in their different degrees, by close attention to reality,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Boswell's candid confession, in almost the same phrasing that he uses here, in *Boswelliana*, 291:

I can more easily part with a good sum at once than with a number of small sums—with a hundred guineas rather than with two guineas at fifty different times; as one has less pain from having a tooth drawn whole than when it breaks and is pulled out in pieces.

and acquiring contrary habits. Narrowness is a disease of tension, Prodigality of relaxation, and suitable remedies must be applied to each of them. As without judgement and thought a man cannot wisely save; neither can he liberally spend. A wise man will have value for his saving, and not barter reputation too cheaply; and a profuse scattering of money without rational design, or clear intention, is not generosity. They who profit by the largesses of a person of that character are no more obliged to him than they are to the unconscious clouds for shedding refreshing dews. To know when to spend, and when to spare, and how to exchange money in the most advantageous manner for what it will procure, is the science of good œconomy, and he only who practises that science has the proper use of wealth.<sup>7</sup> The French, whom I think remarkable for practical good sense, are admirable œconomists, and contrive to have more elegant luxury at less expence than any other nation. I am not sure how much œconomy is owing to a natural turn for it, and to what degree it may be attained; but I can have no doubt that the extremes of Narrowness and Prodigality may be shunned, and that we may improve more and more in the *golden mean*.

A more exquisite condensation of what I wish to recommend, cannot, in my opinion, be conceived, than the following lines by Pope to Lord Bathurst.

The sense to value riches, with the art  
 T' enjoy them, and the virtue to impart,  
 Not meanly, nor ambitiously pursued,  
 Not sunk by sloth, nor rais'd by servitude;  
 To balance Fortune by a just expence,  
 Join with œconomy, magnificence;  
 With splendour, charity; with plenty, health;  
 Oh, teach us, Bathurst! yet unspoil'd by wealth!  
 That secret rare, between th' extremes to move  
 Of mad good-nature, and of mean self-love.<sup>8</sup>

But I am not going at all to retract my testimony for the dig-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 56, the letters of Johnson to Boswell (*Life of J.*, 4. 171-72, 175, 178, 180, 405), and Johnson's frequent advice to "let your imports be more than your exports" (*ibid.*, 3. 300, 366; 4. 261).

<sup>8</sup> *Mor. Ess.*, 3. 219.

nity of Wealth, though I admit, that, like learning, or any other respectable quality, it may fail of its influence, by reason of other qualities inherent in its possessor.<sup>9</sup> “*Valeat possessor oportet*—the owner must be in health,” says Horace, “*si comportatis rebus bene cogitet uti*—to have the true enjoyment of his possessions.”<sup>10</sup> So in order to have the elevation of riches he must be free from degrading circumstances. “*Regina pecunia*—queen money,” as Juvenal<sup>11</sup> with indignation expresses himself, is in fact not absolutely supreme. It rarely happens that the same man who acquires a fortune can have the full benefit of it.<sup>12</sup> There must be an acknowledged rank to support wealth. *Callias*, a man *non tam generosus quam pecuniosus*—a man of blood disproportioned to his great wealth, is exhibited by *Nepos*, in his life of *Cimon*, as a character by no means to be envied; for he shews us with what difficulty he made his way by mere weight of money.<sup>13</sup> Riches, accumulated upon a low-born man, are like embroidery upon coarse rug. Vulgarity is ever prominent to observation, and envy incites to a keener preception of contrast; so that I have seen a man of this kind at one of his feasts look as if he were the steward, entertaining in his master’s absence. I am afraid that in this age, there is too much appearance of respect to be procured by splendid exertions of wealth, even in those whom we despise. But this is only appearance; and will not pass but upon men naturally dull or

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 4, 44, and Johnson’s remarks quoted in note 17 to *Hyp.* 56.

<sup>10</sup> *Epist.*, I. 2. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Not Juvenal, but Horace, *Epist.*, I. 6. 37. In a letter from Boswell to Johnson in 1766 (*Letters of B.*, I. 94), the quotation is given more fully, with complete reference to the proper author.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson counsels, upon this melancholy circumstance, “The sooner that a man begins to enjoy his wealth, the better” (*Life of J.*, 2. 260), and “It is better to live rich than to die rich” (*ibid.*, 3. 345).

Contrast to these statements, *Hyp.* 56, ca. n. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Boswell somewhat exaggerates the difficulties of *Callias*. *Nepos* says,

A certain *Callias*, a man whose birth was not equal to his wealth, and who had made a great fortune from the mines, being desirous of having the imprisoned *Cimon*’s half-sister and spouse for a wife, tried to prevail on *Cimon* to resign her to him, saying that if he obtained his desire, he would pay the fine for him. Though *Cimon* received such a proposal with scorn, *Elpinice* said that she would not allow a son of *Miltiades* to die in the public prison, when she could prevent it.

blinded by gross vanity.<sup>14</sup> The sound, shrewd, and clear-sighted, will see the imposition and avoid it. Not only shocking vices, but a weak understanding, a diminutive or a clumsy figure, a trifling or a rustick manner, will disappoint the importance of fortune. It was with just wit observed of a little poor-looking man, who had a handsome chariot, "I profess he is a disgrace to his own equipage."

<sup>14</sup> Contrast this statement to *Hyp.* 56, and the remarks of Johnson on respect for wealth there noted. The view expressed here is paralleled by other statements of Johnson (*Life of J.*, 2. 176):

BOSWELL. "At present, Sir, I think riches seem to gain most respect." JOHNSON. "No, Sir, riches do not gain hearty respect; they only procure external attention. A very rich man, from low beginnings, may buy his election in a borough; but, *cæteris paribus*, a man of family will be preferred. People will prefer a man for whose father their fathers have voted, though they should get no more money, or even less. . . . If gentlemen of family would allow the rich upstarts to spend their money profusely, which they are ready enough to do, and not vie with them in expence, the upstarts would soon be at an end, and the gentlemen would remain: but if the gentlemen will vie in expence with the upstarts, which is very foolish, they must be ruined."

See also *ibid.*, 3. 297, and *Hebr.*, 120, 263, 373. An example of Johnson's point is Boswell's curious mixture of attitudes toward Mr. Thrale (*Life of J.*, 1. 567 ff.); he intersperses remarks on Thrale's good principles, sound understanding, and skill in trade, with generalizations reflecting unpleasantly upon the status of his sometime host:

This year was distinguished by [Johnson's] being introduced into the family of Mr. Thrale, one of the most eminent brewers of England, and Member of Parliament for Southwark. Foreigners are not a little amazed when they hear of brewers, distillers, and men in similar departments of trade, held forth as persons of considerable consequence. In this great commercial country it is natural that a situation which produces much wealth should be considered as very respectable; and, no doubt, honest industry is entitled to esteem. But, perhaps, the too rapid advance of men of low extraction tends to lessen the value of that distinction by birth and gentility, which ever has been found beneficial to the grand scheme of subordination. . . .

There may be some who think that a new system of gentility might be established, upon principles totally different from what have hitherto prevailed. Our present heraldry, it may be said, is suited to the barbarous times in which it had its origin. It is chiefly founded upon ferocious merit, upon military excellence. Why, in civilised times, we may be asked, should not there be rank and honours, upon principles, which, independent of long custom, are certainly not less worthy, and which, when once allowed to be connected with elevation and precedence, would obtain the same dignity in our imagination? Why should not the knowledge, the skill, the expertness, the assiduity, and the spirited hazards of trade and commerce, when crowned with success, be entitled to give those flattering distinctions by which mankind are so universally captivated?

Such are the specious, but false, arguments for a proposition which always will find numerous advocates, in a nation where men are every day starting up from obscurity to wealth. To refute them is needless. The general sense of mankind cries out, with irresistible force, "*Un gentilhomme est toujours gentilhomme.*"

See also *Letters of B.*, 1. 222.

Comparable to these remarks is that made by Johnson on "an acquaintance of ours whose manners and every thing about him, though expensive, were coarse" (*ibid.*, 3. 467)—"Sir, you see in him vulgar prosperity." This may have been

We do not feel the pleasure of saving till there is a fair beginning of a fund. To gather money is like making a collection of medals or of any thing else. When one has but a coin or two it does not seem worth while to lay it up. But as soon as there is a visible stock, the desire of encreasing arises. Gathering money has this great advantage over every other species of gathering, that instead of there being an annual loss upon the collection there is an annual gain; and indeed the science of compound interest, when it has once taken possession of the mind with its luminous magnifying power, must operate steadily and to admiration.

I hope none of my pious readers, whom I am most anxious to please, are troubled with scrupulous fears of Riches, from misapprehending temporary precepts, adapted to the early state of Christianity. If there be any in that state I recommend to them to read judicious commentators, who I cannot doubt will relieve them. To be "*rich in good works*,"<sup>15</sup> is above all to be desired and endeavoured. But Riches, in the common acceptation of the word, are necessary in order to enable us to do good. In my last number I guarded myself by observing that there is nothing worse in setting our hearts on riches than on any other of "*the things upon earth*," and the acquisition of wealth is always to be understood as subordinate to the greater concerns of futurity. I am only giving

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one of the printers whose success enabled them to keep up costly establishments and coaches; among the number were Dodsley, who had been a footman; Franklin and Strahan, who rose from journeyman printers to members of the House of Commons; Griffith, the tyrant of Goldsmith on the Monthly Review, Hamilton of the Critical Review, and Cave, who manifested the good fortune brought to his Gentleman's Magazine through Johnson's parliamentary debates by immediately "buying an old coach and a pair of older horses" (*Life of J.*, I. 175 n.3). See the Index to the *Life* under these names. The observation which Boswell quotes at the end of the paragraph was probably directed at some such "upstart."

<sup>15</sup> *1 Tim.*, 6. 18. Cf. the letter from Johnson to Boswell of September 1782 (*Life of J.*, 4. 178):

When the thoughts are extended to a future state, the present life seems hardly worthy of all those principles of conduct, and maxims of prudence, which one generation of men has transmitted to another; but upon a closer view, when it is perceived how much evil is produced, and how much good is impeded by embarrassment and distress, and how little room the expedients of poverty leave for the exercise of virtue, it grows manifest that the boundless importance of the next life enforces some attention to the interests of this.

Boswell's subsequent quotation is an adaptation of the *treasures upon earth* of *Mtth.*, 6. 19-20.

money fair play amongst the pursuits of this life. If it shall be objected that we cannot carry it with us when death comes, the answer is, that neither can we carry with us our books or our pictures, our houses, our gardens, our lawns, or our groves, of all which we may, without offending against religion, be pleasingly fond, and that without such fondness the lives of all but pure mysticks, who it is meant should be few, would be passed in torpid inutility.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 40, 52, 54 n. 8. For Boswell's frequent use of *torpid* see *Hyp.* 65 n. 5.

No. LVIII. July 1782.

## [ON HOSPITALITY]

Τὸν φιλέοντ' ἐπὶ δαιτα καλεῖν. —HESIOD.<sup>1</sup>

“Invite your friend to dine or sup with you.”

**H**OSPITALITY is the virtue which is in the most eminent degree its own reward. A man may have a full consciousness of benevolence in many other ways. But in Hospitality he finds his consciousness confirmed and brightened by reflection from the complacent looks of his guests, while they sit around his board partaking of his good cheer.

At first view, Hospitality appears to be a savage virtue, a virtue which can be exercised only in a rude state of society, where habitations are thinly scattered, and provisions scantily procured. For how can there be room for hospitality where all have enough of lodging and food? No doubt there is much more need of Hospitality in uncultivated wilds than in improved districts; and accordingly it prevails more in the former than in the latter. In the former, strangers are rare, and in Hospitality there is a mutual advantage to them and to those who entertain them, for intellectual entertainment is there communicated by almost any stranger. Whereas in the latter, strangers are so numerous, that there arises a class of men to whom it is a gainful traffick to furnish them every convenience and even every luxury for money; and of those who are received into private houses as friends, a choice is made by connection, recommendation, or taste.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Works and Days*, 342. The magazine text omitted the accents and breathing mark from τὸν, φιλέοντ', ἐπὶ.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the opinions of Johnson:

I asked him how far he thought wealth should be employed in hospitality. JOHNSON. “You are to consider that ancient hospitality, of which we hear so much, was in an uncommercial country, when men being idle, were glad to be entertained at rich men’s tables. But in a commercial country, a busy country, time becomes precious, and therefore hospitality is not so much valued. No doubt there is still room for a certain degree of it; and a man has a satisfaction in seeing his friends eating and drinking about him. But promiscuous hospitality is not the way to gain real influence . . . ; being entertained ever so well at a man’s table, impresses no lasting regard or esteem.” (*Life of J.*, 2. 192.)

“Hospitality to strangers and foreigners in our country is now almost at an end, since, from the increase of them that come to us, there have been a sufficient number of people that have found an interest in providing inns and proper accommodations, which is in general a more expedient method for the entertainment of travellers. Where the travellers and strangers

It is pleasing to think how sacred Hospitality has been held in all nations. To violate its faith has been even looked upon as a crime of the utmost abhorrence, even amongst bands of robbers. "*Non hospes ab hospite tutus*—a want of security between the master of a house and his guests," is pointed out by *Ovid* amongst the abominations of corrupted manners.<sup>3</sup> I imagine the edict *Nautæ coupones stabularii* of the Roman law, by which landlords and shipmasters were made answerable for all kinds of property brought into their houses or ships by lodgers or passengers, has taken its rise from that care of every thing belonging to them, which the mind, carrying on the original idea of an entertainer of strangers, has imputed to them as a duty, as an indispensable charge; though I recollect the reason assigned is restraining their shameful frauds.

Old *Hesiod*, in the motto to this paper, counsels us to invite our friends to feast with us. The passage from whence it is taken proceeds to bid us not ask an enemy, but to be chiefly desirous of having the company of a near neighbour. There is something primitive in all this, which may serve as very good doctrine even at this day. An indiscriminate invitation to share with us, what should be uniformly esteemed a pledge of cordiality, I cannot approve. There is to be sure no occasion for being leagued together in bands offensive and defensive, as in former times, for absolute preservation of our lives and properties; nor is it necessary now, as it was then, to be pledged, while we drink, by a trusty friend with a drawn sword, lest we should be murdered while off our guard. But I would have none to sit down as entertainer and guest who are not at least free from ill-will to each other.

The more attentively we compare man with other animals, the more points of difference shall we find between him and them.

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are few, more of that hospitality subsists, as it has not been worth while to provide places of accommodation. In Ireland there is still hospitality to strangers, in some degree; in Hungary and Poland probably more." (*Ibid.*, 4. 21.)

For Johnson's praise of the English tavern life and London hospitality, see *ibid.*, 2. 254, 516, 517 n. 2. Casanova was bewildered and somewhat displeased by English taverns, the food they offered, and the dependence of Englishmen upon them (*Memoirs*, Navarre edition, 2. 153, 155 ff.).

<sup>3</sup> *Metam.*, I. 144.

Other animals take a pleasure in sharing the food they like best with their young, or even preferring them. But I believe man alone treats others of his species in that manner.<sup>4</sup> The entertainment given in the fable by the City Mouse to the Country Mouse, is not more founded on truth than their carrying on a conversation in very smart dialogue. I have therefore always thought it the mark of a brutish disposition to feed alone, or even to eat perpetually with one's own family, which is comparatively unsocial, and makes one figure a groupe of beasts in the same den day after day.

An interchange of entertaining is one of the varieties of life. No two things are quite alike. The poorest beggars will taste each other's brown crumbs, or half-picked bones and be amused with the difference. So in better situations, we taste each other's milk, or fruit, or mutton, or any thing else that is brought to the table; and we know the varieties of cookery, confectionary, and wines are infinite. When there is a good-humoured competition who shall have the best things for his friends, or when the excellence is divided, as when one has the best fish, another the best fowl, a third the best garden stuff, and there is a pleasant rotation of acknowledged advantage, it is very agreeable. But there have been violent animosities owing to contested tables; and even petty rivalships in pastry, or in syllabubs, have rankled in gentle bosoms.

Where a man entertains from ostentation, where

“All is more than hospitably good,”

as at the table of the sumptuous man in Parnell's *Hermit*, there is no virtue, and of consequence no praise; though numbers will resort to enjoy the luxury, and inwardly laugh at the vanity of the master who exhibits like a showman.<sup>5</sup> But the difference is easily perceived between such vanity and that real hearty wish to make others happy, with which some men in all ranks are blessed; for I will not exclude that blessing from any rank though envy may strive to create such a belief. I have seen it with exultation at the tables of the first nobility; and it cannot be denied that what is a blessing in a cottage, is, if equally genuine, a superlative blessing<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Originally, *nature*; corrected by a note printed at the end of *Hyp.* 59.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 56, 57, and notes.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 4, 8, 20, 40, and notes.

in a palace. It is one of the scriptural characteristicks of a bishop to be “given to Hospitality.”<sup>7</sup> It would be hard if the magnificence of a prelate, whose see has been piously endowed with a princely revenue, should put an absolute bar on a heart as good as Hooker’s, while he “eat his bread in peace and privacy,”<sup>8</sup> as a worthy parish priest. And who will deny that such a heart may be found in a bishop.

The Hospitality of convents never comes into my mind but with a feeling of reverential fondness. To entertain those to whom entertainment is truly a relief and a consolation is the Hospitality recommended in the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> For this, every one who is able, may find opportunities of one kind or other, which will be gladly embraced by indigent relations, or people of modest merit, who can barely live, and to whom the daily fare of the rich is a regale. This sort of laudable Hospitality is still kept up at stated times in some places of this island. I once dined at Durham on a Sunday with the prebendary in residence. A number of the poor who were good decent old people eat at table, and were helped bountifully. After dinner, every man of them had a glass of ale, and every woman a glass of sweet wine; and then each of them had a paper of tobacco, and withdrew to a hall to smoak it. I witnessed this scene with uncommon satisfaction.

There is something still worse than ostentatious entertaining, which is bringing people to a feast in order to domineer over them like a bashaw, compel their eating and drinking with all the rigour of an Egyptian taskmaster, to crush their opinions, stifle their

<sup>7</sup> *1 Tim.*, 3. 2. Boswell keeps this scriptural behest in mind; cf. *Letters of B.*, 2. 304, where he congratulates his friend Temple on his visits to a bishop, but objects that he does not hear of any invitation to dinner—“Should not a bishop be given to hospitality?” See also *ibid.*, 2. 350.

<sup>8</sup> Boswell is quoting by memory from Walton’s *Life of Mr. Richard Hooker* (1666), concerning Hooker’s first refusal of the Mastership of the Temple in 1585:

His wish was rather to gain a better country living, where he might . . . eat that bread which he might more properly call his own in privacy and quietness.

Boswell was very fond of Walton’s *Lives* (see *Hyp.* 51, *Life of J.*, 2. 510, *Letters of B.*, 1. 205); his anxiety to see a new edition of the work led him, after endeavoring to right a misunderstanding on the project between Lord Hailes and Dr. Horne, to propose editing it himself (*Letters of B.*, 1. 260).

<sup>9</sup> *Mtth.*, 25. 35 ff. See also *Rom.*, 12. 13; *Pet.* 4. 9.

pleasantry, or make them the butt of ridicule. Less oppressive, but troublesome enough, are those entertainers who expect to be flattered in one or other of the modes which the united ingenuity of such men and their sycophants have contrived.<sup>10</sup> *Prior*, in what he calls an *Imitation of Chaucer*, has given us one instance:

Full oft doth Mat with Topaz dine,  
Eateth bak'd meats, drinketh Greek wine;  
But Topaz his own werkes rehearseth,  
And Mat mote praise, what Topaz verseth.  
Now sure as saint did e'er shrive sinner  
Full hardly earneth Mat his dinner.

The thought is borrowed from *Martial*, Lib. III. Epig. 50, which begins,

*Hæc tibi non alia est ad cœnam causa vocandi  
Versiculos recites ut Ligurine tuos.*

“To supper Ligurinus you invite  
“For nothing but your verses to recite.”

There is in this epigram an humourous account of the different courses being loaded with their several proportions of the entertainer’s poetry, extending to no less than five books. One would not eat growse and drink canary on such terms.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 32 n. 16, and *Boswelliana*, 281:

June 18th, 1774.—Cosmo Gordon and I were talking of David Moncrieffe, whose vanity was consummate, and who was flattered prodigiously by those whom he entertained. . . . I said Moncrieffe entertained people to flatter him, as we feed a cow to give us milk. The better the pasture, the more plentiful and richer will the milk be. Moncrieffe therefore feeds his *pecora ventri obedientia* in clover. Other comparisons may be made. He feeds people like silk-worms, for their silk, or like civet cats, for their perfume.

See also *ibid.*, 295.

<sup>11</sup> Boswell’s paragraph, to the last sentence, is a paraphrase of the epigram; his translation of the two opening lines is unfortunately arranged, however. It implies that Ligurinus is the unfortunate guest invited, not the disagreeable host whom Martial chides by name:

Haec tibi, non alia, est ad cœnam causa vocandi,  
versiculos recites ut, Ligurine, tuos.  
depositi soleas, adfertur protinus ingens  
inter lactucas oxygarumque liber:  
alter perlegitur, dum fercula prima morantur:  
tertius est, nec adhuc mensa secunda venit:  
et quartum recitas et quintum denique librum.  
putidus est, totiens si mihi ponis aprum.  
quod si non scombris scelerata poemata donas,  
cenabis solus iam, Ligurine, domi.

Some men have a peculiar genius for entertaining well. They take delight in it, and do it with ease and alacrity, so that their tables are never-failing scenes of jovial society. Such men ought to have handsome fortunes because they can turn them to the best account. We must all recollect the warm encomiums usually made upon the master of the house, where we have enjoyed a happy day. "There never was a worthier man than our friend," is echoed from one guest to another in their way from his house.

We are told that *Swift*, when invited to dine on some favourite dishes, would say, "I don't mind your bill of fare, let me have your bill of company." The bill of fare is, however, of some consequence, as is effectually, though tacitly, acknowledged by the numbers who flock to a good table. Good company I allow is a higher feast; but they do best together.<sup>12</sup> There is a nice knowledge of character as well as a benevolent disposition displayed in sorting a company, an art in which I have known fewer people excel than in any other. Painting and musick are not so difficult for the principles, the component parts are each a study. But when there is a company of eminent merit of various kinds, finely adapted, and all in exertion, the effect is exquisite indeed!

Such enjoyment as this, such "*noctes cœnæque deum*"—evenings

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<sup>12</sup> Swift was somewhat vain of this mild joke; he quotes it twice in his *Journal to Stella*,—once on July 29, 1711, and again, with additions, on Sept. 2, 1711:

I dined with Mr. Masham, because he lets me have a select company. For the Court here have got by the end a good thing I said to the secretary some weeks ago. He shewed me his bill of fare to tempt me to dine with him. Poh, said I, I value not your bill of fare, give me your bill of company. Lord treasurer was mightily pleased, and told it every body, as a notable thing.

Boswell's zestful paragraph is supported by the evidence as to his delight in giving dinners; see *Life of J.*, Index, under BOSWELL, dinners; and *Letters of B.*, Index, under DINNERS. He prided himself on preferring Johnson's conversation above the needs of the flesh (*Life of J.*, 2. 204; 3. 279), but clearly his sincerest feeling about good company is expressed here. The passage is a gay contradiction of Johnson's surly remarks about the time wasted in hospitality (cf. *Hyp.* 37 n. 17) and the difficulties to be met in entertaining (*Life of J.*, 2. 192):

JOHNSON. ". . . You must help some people at table before others; you must ask some people how they like their wine oftener than others. You therefore offend more people than you please. You are like the French statesman, who said, when he granted a favour, 'J'ai fait dix mécontents et un ingrat.'"

See also *ibid.*, 3. 65–66.

and suppers of gods,”<sup>13</sup> can rarely be had, unless in large cities, where there is a multiplicity of choice, and companies are arranged by invitation. But to have this in the general course of life would be too luxuriously selfish; and they, who from felicity of circumstances are more refined and accomplished, should consider it as a duty to communicate some of their advantages to less fortunate, but worthy and modest neighbours in the country. This is genuine, kindly hospitality, which ought by all means to be promoted, that good will may be more diffused amongst different ranks, and the elegancies of the metropolis may in some degree be known by those who live at a distance from it, while at the same time, the fragments of feasting gladden the hearts of the poor.<sup>14</sup>

I know of no legislature that has enforced Hospitality by statute, except the parliament of Scotland; and it does them honour. It seems that about two centuries ago, a strange and shameful custom prevailed there for noblemen and gentlemen to desert their country seats, and reside altogether in towns, or if they did live at their country seats, to board themselves with their own servants, that they might not be at the expence of entertaining their neighbours, or relieving the poor. To restrain this, there was an act passed in the reign of James VI. of Scotland, afterwards also I. of England, 1581, Cap. 116, entitled—“Against the abuse

<sup>13</sup> Horace, *Sat.*, 2. 6. 65—a favorite allusion of Boswell’s. He uses it again in the course of his dedication of the *Life of Johnson* to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and likewise in a letter of 1788 to Malone (*Letters of B.*, 2. 352), full of a prospective relish for a forthcoming return to London: “I trust I shall have one or two *noctes cœnæque Deum*—ay and Dearum.”

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 37 on the duty of entertaining in the country; but, as regards the poor, contrast the observations of Johnson (*Life of J.*, 4. 21):

“For hospitality, as formerly practised, there is no longer the same reason; heretofore the poorer people were more numerous, and from want of commerce, their means of getting a livelihood more difficult; therefore the supporting them was an act of great benevolence; now that the poor can find maintenance for themselves, and their labour is wanted, a general undiscerning hospitality tends to ill, by withdrawing them from their work to idleness and drunkenness. Then, formerly rents were received in kind, so that there was a great abundance of provisions in possession of the owners of the lands, which, since the plenty of money afforded by commerce, is no longer the case.”

It must be remembered, however, that Johnson is speaking of conditions in England, whereas Boswell is thinking of conditions in Scotland, where for the most part industries were not yet demanding cheap labor; see Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides*, 211 ff. Johnson seems to contradict himself in *Life of J.*, 4. 3.

of sum landed gentil-men, and utheris forbearing to keep house at their awin dwelling places.”<sup>15</sup> It is a singular curiosity, and as the Scottish acts are very short, I shall insert it completely for the amusement of my readers, subjoining a glossary of the most difficult words.

“\* Forasmeikle, as of lait there is croppen in amangis sum noblemen, prelates, baronnes, and gentil-men, in certaine pairts of this realme, being of gude livinges, great abuse contrair the honour of the realme, and different from the honest frugalitie of their forebeares, passing to burrows-towns, clauuchannes, and aile-houses with their houshaldes, and sum abiding in their awin places, usis to buird themselves and others to their awin servands, as in hostillaries, quhairon skaithful and shameful inconvenients daylie falles out, to the offence of God, defrauding of the pure of their almes, sclander of the cuntrie, and hurt of the authours. For remeid quhairof, our Soveraine Lord, with advise of his three estates of this present parliament, hes statute and ordained: That every prelate, lord, barronne, and landed gentil-man, sall make his ordinair dwelling and residence at his awin house with his familie, in all time cumming, after the publication of the acts of this present parliament. For setting forward of policie and decoration of their saides dwelling places, supporting of the pure with almes, and intertwining of friendschipe with their nicht-boures be all gude and honest means. And that they forbeare the said unhonest forme of buirding of themselves, and their families, and households, in burrowes, clauuchannes, and ailehouses, or in their awin houses, under the pains following: That is to say: ilk lord and prelate, under the pain of 500 markes, ilk great barronne under the pain of 300 markes, and ilk landed gentil-man under the pain of 200 markes. And gif they failzie, being called and ordourlie convict of transgressing this present act, the saidis paines to be uplifted to our Soveraine Lord’s use.”

* <i>Forasmeikle</i> , forasmuch	<i>croppen in</i> , crept in	<i>amangis</i> , amongst
<i>forebeares</i> , forefathers	<i>clauuchannes</i> , villages	<i>skaithful</i> , hurtful
<i>pure</i> , poor	<i>sclander</i> , scandal	<i>ilk</i> , each.

<sup>15</sup> See also *Hyp.* 69, for Scottish acts on oaths. These are no doubt part of the collection of ancient Scottish documents which Lord Auchinleck had begun, and which he and Johnson desired Boswell to continue (see *Life of J.*, 3. 471—a letter from Johnson to Boswell in 1779):

If you would, in compliance with your father’s advice, enquire into the old tenures and old charters of Scotland, you would certainly open to yourself many striking scenes of the manners of the middle ages. The feudal system, in a country half-barbarous, is naturally productive of great anomalies in civil life. The knowledge of past times is naturally growing less in all cases not of publick record; and the past time of Scotland is so unlike the present, that it is





Collings del.

*Boswell on His Native Heath*

Rowlandson sculp.

Were the British parliament to make a similar statute, obliging our modern nobility and gentry to reside upon their estates, and never to come to London but *bonâ fide* upon real business,<sup>16</sup> without paying a proportional fine *toties quoties*, not only would

already difficult for a Scotchman to imagine the œconomy of his grandfather. Do not be tardy nor negligent; but gather up eagerly what can yet be found.

Boswell obviously was tardy and negligent, however, since Johnson had already urged him to the work in 1772 (*Life of J.*, 2. 232), and Boswell's note to the letter quoted above shows that when the *Life* was published in 1791 he had not yet accomplished anything definite—"I have a valuable collection made by my Father, which, with some additions and illustrations of my own, I intend to publish." There is no way of ascertaining whether the acts printed in the essays are part of the original collection, or Boswell's additions.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 36, 37, 38 and notes. This censure of the absentee landlord is further covert criticism of Boswell himself. He hated the retired life of the country, and was constantly manufacturing the thinnest pretexts for leaving it; these ranged from the spiritual necessity of attending church services in England with Johnson, to the vague need of Johnson's advice upon his domestic affairs (see *Letters of B.*, 1. 173, 191, 263, 266; 2. 310; *Letters of J.*, 2. 16, 271; *Life of J.*, 2. 315-17; 3. 144-48; 4. 178-89).

Johnson usually did his best to dissuade Boswell from coming to London as frequently as he would have liked to do, but he himself was not fully satisfied that it was the *duty* of the landlord to live at home. On one occasion he admitted to Boswell that such an obligation seemed to him more sentimental than reasonable (*Life of J.*, 3. 201):

".... were I in your father's place, I should not consent to your settling [in London]; for I have the old feudal notions, and I should be afraid that Auchinleck would be deserted, as you would soon find it more desirable to have a country-seat in a better climate. I own, however, that to consider it as a *duty* to reside on a family estate is a prejudice; for we must consider, that working-people get employment equally, and the produce of land is sold equally, whether a great family resides at home or not; and if the rents of an estate be carried to London, they return again in the circulation of commerce; nay, Sir, we must perhaps allow, that carrying the rents to a distance is a good, because it contributes to that circulation. We must, however, allow, that a well-regulated family may improve a neighbourhood in civility and elegance, and give an example of good order, virtue, and piety; and so its residence at home may be of much advantage. But if a great family be disorderly and vicious, its residence at home is very pernicious to a neighbourhood. There is not now the same inducement to live in the country as formerly; the pleasures of social life are much better enjoyed in town; and there is no longer in the country that power and influence in proprietors of land which they had in old times, and which made the country so agreeable to them."

Later on, however, he expressed himself as strongly in favor of the "prejudice," answering his own arguments against it point for point (*ibid.*, 3. 283):

.... I endeavoured to maintain, in argument, that a landed gentleman is not under any obligation to reside upon his estate; and that by living in London he does no injury to his country. JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, he does no injury to his country in general, because the money he draws from it gets back again in circulation; but to his particular district, his particular

laudable Hospitality be more general, but a considerable addition to the revenue might be raised under a different title, but the same in effect with the late exploded *tax on publick amusements*.

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parish, he does an injury. All that he has to give away is not given to those who have the first claim to it. And though I have said that the money circulates back, it is a long time before that happens. Then, Sir, a man of family and estate ought to consider himself as having the charge of a district, over which he is to diffuse civility and happiness."

A tax such as Boswell suggests, on Irish absentees, was drafted for presentation in the Irish parliament, but was dropped because of the outcry from indignant proprietors (*Letters of Horace Walpole*, 6. 6 and note).

The "exploded" tax on public amusements was probably one of the innumerable attempts of administration to get funds by taxing luxuries (see Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*); Boswell makes scornful reference to Pitt's tax on saddle or carriage horses in *Hebr.*, 57.

No. LIX. Aug. 1782.

## [ON FLATTERY]

Τὸ δὲ τοῦ παρασίτου ὄνομα πάλαι μὲν ἦν σεμνὸν καὶ ἱερόν.

—ATHENÆUS.<sup>1</sup>

“The title of Parasite was anciently respectable and sacred.”

THE MOTTO of this paper will I doubt not, startle many of my readers; who, from the contemptible notion generally entertained of a parasite, will be struck with equal surprise, as if told, that a coward, a lyar, or a scoundrel, was anciently a title respectable and sacred.

Yet that the fact was so, we are well informed by *Athenæus*, in his large collection or *farrago* of Memoirs of Mankind, in fifteen books, under the curious denomination of *deipnosophistæ*, or *supper philosophy*, the *table-talk* of ancient sages, which the learned Casaubon has augmented with ample annotations.<sup>1a</sup>

There was, it seems, in pagan imagination, something whimsically mysterious supposed in the character of one, who while he shared in the feast, cheered and elevated all around him, by raising in their minds agreeable and lofty notions of themselves; and hence it was feigned, that some of the Gods were the parasites of Jove. A parasite, as I have now displayed the character, is essentially valuable; and we find in *Athenæus*, that the *bards* of the *Celtic* nations were looked upon in that light by *Posidonius*, who describes their chiefs carrying about with them men so called, whose business it was to celebrate, in their presence, the glories of their ancestors, and of their own achievements. Yet nobody will controvert that the bards were personages highly venerable.

Adulation or flattery in whatever way exercised, if it produce

<sup>1</sup> The magazine text gave παρασίτου for παρασίτου and ἱερόν for ἱερόν.

<sup>1a</sup> Boswell quotes Bk. 6, chap. 26. Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), whom Scaliger called “the most learned man in Europe,” was a Swiss classic scholar whose conservative but protestant religious bent brought him to England in 1610, where he found a patron in James I and became naturalized. He is famous for his edition of *Athenæus* (ca. 1600), but he also produced studies on Polybius, Suetonius, Persius, and Strabo; at the request of James, he began an examination of the *Annals* of Baronius (see *Hyp.* 43), but it remains a fragment.

In the magazine text, Casaubon was printed *Causabon*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

complacency, will be sure of regard, and whatever may be the refined disguises of more civilized times, when people will not avow the delight which they take in being flattered, it is certain that a successful flatterer is as highly valued now, as in the rudest ages of barbarity, when his art was openly known as an office, which indeed it was even in Sylla's time, when many of the publick lands were appropriated to parasites. In our publick constitution there still remains an office of that kind, the *Poet-Laureat*, whose duty it is to flatter the sovereign twice every year. The office is by no means held in disesteem; and I will do *Mr. Whitehead*, the present laureat, the justice to say, there is no probability that its credit will sink in his time. For considering the sameness of his topics, each new year and each birth day, it is wonderful to find so much spirit and elegance in his odes.<sup>2</sup>

Nations, bodies of men, and persons in great employments, may have adulation to any degree offered to them, without indelicacy; for, where there is a large number, each has a small share of the praise; and where there is a great employment, the praise may be considered as directed more to the office than to the man.

The nice and delicate art is to flatter individuals simply as such; and of this there are so many modes, that people of good temper, and any ingenuity and address, who apply their attention to it, will be pretty sure to succeed.

*Theophrastus* in his *characters*, has given us that of a flatterer so well, that it is not merely entertaining as a picture of Grecian manners, but has the striking features which flattery at all times exhibits to an observing eye; so that one might take it for a character in our own, as well as any other age. I shall present it to my readers in *Budgell's* lively translation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The flattery of the laureate, like that of stage speeches, was "formular," according to Johnson (*Life of J.*, 2. 268). William Whitehead (1715-1785) became poet laureate at the death of Cibber and after Gray's refusal of the post, in 1757; later he took the post of play-reader for Garrick. Churchill loved to ridicule his laureate efforts, and presented him in *The Ghost* (1762) as the heir of Method and Dullness; Johnson dubbed him "but a little man to inscribe verses to players," and contrasted his ornate style to the familiar one of Cibber with the comment "Grand nonsense is insupportable" (*Life of J.*, 1. 465). Boswell always refers to him with pleasure; see his defense of Whitehead in the *Life of J.*, accompanying the passage just cited, and *Hyp.* 11, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Published in 1714. Eustace Budgell (1686-1737) was a relative of Addi-

"Flattery is a manner of conversation very shameful in itself, but beneficial to the flatterer. If a flatterer is upon a publick walk with you, Do but mind, says he, how every one's eye is upon you. Sure there is not a man in Athens that is taken so much notice of. You had justice done you yesterday in the Portico. There were above thirty of us together, and the question being started, who was the most considerable person in the common-wealth? the whole company was of the same side. In short, Sir, every one made familiar with your name. He follows his whisper with a thousand other flatteries of the same nature. If a bit of lint sticks to your garment, he takes it off with great officiousness. If the wind has blown a feather or straw into your hair, he picks it out very carefully, and shewing it you, with a most insipid smile, How old you are grown, says he, since I saw you last! 'Tis time enough, methinks, for a man of your age to have grey hairs in his head. Whenever the person to whom he would make his court begins to speak, the sycophant begs the company to be silent, most impudently praises him to his face, is in raptures all the while he talks, and as soon as he has done, cries out, That is perfectly right! When his patron aims at being witty upon any man, he is ready to burst at the smartness of his raillery, and stops his mouth with his handkerchief, that he may not laugh out. If he walks with him in the street, he clears the way for him, and makes every one stand till he is gone by. When he comes home and calls his children about him, the Flatterer has a pocket full of apples for them, which he distributes among them with a great deal of fondness; wonders to see so many fine boys, and turning about to the father, tells him, they are all as like him as they can stare. His patron cannot so much as try on a shoe, but he falls a complimenting him upon the shape of his foot. If he makes a visit, our Parasite runs before him, gives notice to the master of the house, and returns quite out of breath, to let him know that every thing is ready for his reception. He is perfectly well versed in all female business, and is as handy among the women as the best of them. When he is invited to a feast, he is the very first man that calls for a glass of wine, and is wonderfully pleased with the deliciousness of the flavour; gets as near as possible to the man of the house, and tells him with much concern, that he eats nothing himself. He singles out some particular dish, and recommends it to the rest of the company for a rarity. He desires the master of the feast to sit in a warmer part of the room, begs him to take more care of his health, and advises him to put on a supernumerary garment this cold weather. He is in a

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son, whose *Cato* he used as justification for his suicide—the result of scandals surrounding his attempts to repair his ruined fortunes (*Hebr.*, 61). He contributed to *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Guardian*, his papers in the latter two being distinguished by X and \*, respectively.

close whisper with him during the whole entertainment, and has neither eyes nor ears for any one else in the company. When he sees a great man enter the theatre, he snatches the cushion from his servant, and places it under him. If a man shews him his house, he extols the architect, admires the gardens, and expatiates upon the furniture. If the owner is grossly flattered in a picture, he out-flatters the painter, and though he discovers a great likeness in it, can by no means allow that it does justice to the original. In short, his whole business is to ingratiate himself with those who hear him, and to wheedle them out of their senses.”

*John Home*, in his tragedy of *Douglas*, makes the profligate and artful Glenalvon say,

Flattery direct  
Rarely disgusts. They little know mankind  
Who doubt its operation, 'tis my key,  
And opes the wicket to the human heart.<sup>4</sup>

Glenalvon is a character of a rude age; and in proportion as human nature is artless or gross, the more direct should Flattery be to have its influence. A child must be flattered in the plainest terms: so must a savage. Neither of them could perceive a delicate compliment. The incense must be held under their very nose. The same remark may be made upon people much habituated to Flattery, whose appetite for it comes to be so eager and constant, that they languish and are miserable without it. Dr. Young describes their dependent situation very justly,<sup>5</sup>

“See how they beg alms of a Flattery.”

But people, whose taste is refined, must have the sweet and soothing potion of Flattery administered with a gentle hand, that they may sip it as it were imperceptibly, and enjoy the essence without feeling the coarseness of any vehicle. The most effectual Flattery to such people is what is contrived shall come to them by report. “There is no Flattery so irresistible as this at second hand,” says *Fielding* in his *Tom Jones*.<sup>6</sup> Flattery direct may be repelled;

<sup>4</sup> Boswell probably quotes from memory; in the last line, *to* should be *of* (Act 3, closing soliloquy). For Boswell's delight in this play, see *Hyp.* 65 n.11.

<sup>5</sup> In *The Universal Passion*, Sat. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Bk. 3, chap. 5. Cf. *Hyp.* 21 n. 19. Johnson was very susceptible to flattery which was reported to him (*Life of J.*, 4. 38, 365, and 493—a repetition of *Hebr.*, 18), and admitted that a “second hand” compliment was pleasing (*ibid.*,

but Flattery oblique is sure to penetrate. One is not prepared against it; and it darts into the heart. Flattery at second-hand is subtilized like smoak out of a long winding pipe, such as the Turks luxuriously use. It is therefore better to make others carry our Flattery, if we are certain it will be faithfully delivered. But Flattery is in one respect similar to money. We may always have interest upon it; but are sometimes afraid to trust it to others.

The modes of Flattery are various as the characters of men. All however may be flattered by a steady, respectful attention. The power of commanding, which upon every occasion is one of the most certain talents for rising in the world, *Justin* well describes, in *Agathocles*, the smoothness of insinuation, “*blando alloquio et humili adulacione*—by smiling address and humble adulation.”<sup>7</sup> The vain are very open to Flattery. The proud are not less pleased when it reaches them by cautious ingenuity.<sup>8</sup> A remarkable Flatterer, hazarding rather too gross adulation upon one abundantly fond of it, was checked with some displeasure, “Well (said he)

3. 273). He had a strong distaste for direct and fulsome adulation (*ibid.*, 3. 333; *Hebr.*, 263, 451 n., 502 n.; *Piozzi, Anecdotes*, 184), although he said candidly that flattery “pleases very generally” (*Life of J.*, 2. 417).

For Boswell’s susceptibility to flattery see *Hebr.*, 348.

<sup>7</sup> This curiously constructed passage may be clearer after a reading of Boswell’s source, *Justinus’s Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogii*, 22. 7:

Among these was Opheltas, king of Cyrene, who . . . . made an alliance with Agathocles through ambassadors, arranging that . . . . the government of Sicily should fall to Agathocles, and that of Africa to himself. But when he came, accordingly, with a numerous army, to take a share in the war, Agathocles, after throwing him off his guard by the affability of his address and the abjectness of his flattery (*blando alloquio et humili adulacione*), and after they had supped together several times, and he had been adopted by Opheltas as a son, put him to death and took command of his forces.

This is perhaps the worst of Boswell’s many ill constructed sentences, which are sometimes verbless, sometimes unfinished, sometimes run together with inexplicable omissions; see *Hyp.* 11 n. 16; 13 n. 9; 17 n. 7; 19, heading; 22, *passim*; 30 n. 4; 34 n. 5; 44 n. 14; 52 nn. 4, 17; 56; 63 n. 3; 65.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson used such ingenuity in an argument on politeness (*Life of J.*, 3. 183); he was captiously critical of Lord Scarsdale’s house, and Dr. Taylor put him in mind of having appeared pleased with it.

“But (said he) that was when Lord Scarsdale was present. Politeness obliges us to appear pleased with a man’s works when he is present. No man will be so ill bred as to question you. You may therefore pay compliments without saying what is not true. I should say to Lord Scarsdale of his larger room, ‘My Lord, this is the most *costly* room that I ever saw;’ which is true.”

See also *Hyp.* 28 n. 6.

do you know you are the only man whom I have ever found proof against Flattery." This was swallowed; and he gained his end: the deception was natural. Shakspeare has it in his *Julius Cæsar*:

"When I tell him he hates Flatterers  
"He says he does, being then most flattered."

Oriental Flattery appears to us excessive. It is rich as the most odoriferous gums and spices. Yet there have been pretty strong specimens of it in our own island; for instance, a bishop telling James the First "You are the breath of our nostrils." Such Flattery must be evident to the objects of it. But, indeed, people for most part know well enough when they are flattered. Their only fear is, that there may be an intention to impose upon and laugh at them.<sup>9</sup> If they are persuaded there is no such intention they will take a great deal of Flattery with real satisfaction; and they will not be very desirous of detecting fallacy. The mutual flattery of authors, especially of poets, is a remarkable proof of this propensity. *Fenton* says of Flattery,<sup>10</sup>

But most among the bretheren of the bays  
The dear enchantress all her charms displays  
In the sly commerce of alternate praise.

It is at once mean and criminal to flatter while one is conscious of falsehood. But there may be honest as well as dishonest Flattery. There may be Flattery from a sincere admiration and a desire to please.<sup>11</sup> It is benevolent to indulge this; and a man of a

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the advice of Johnson to Mrs. Thrale (*Hebr.* 502 n. 2):

"Unusual compliments, to which there is no stated and prescriptive answer, embarrass the feeble, who know not what to say, and disgust the wise, who knowing them to be false suspect them to be hypocritical."

<sup>10</sup> *Epistle to Thomas Lambard, Esq.*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 2. 417:

BOSWELL. "No quality will get a man more friends than a disposition to admire the qualities of others. I do not mean flattery, but a sincere admiration." JOHNSON. "Nay, Sir, flattery pleases very generally. In the first place, the flatterer may think what he says to be true: but, in the second place, whether he thinks so or not, he certainly thinks those whom he flatters of consequence enough to be flattered."

See also *ibid.*, 3. 273:

BOSWELL. "I think, Sir, it is right to tell one man of such a handsome thing, which has been said of him by another. It tends to increase benevolence."

This is all part of Boswell's innate wish to "admire rather than to find fault"; cf. *Hyp.* 67.

good disposition may find frequent opportunities for it, by directly or obliquely bringing under the view of those with whom he associates, such circumstances in their situations and characters as are agreeable. *Hypochondriacks* stand much in need of such benevolence, for their misery often chiefly consists in a wretched notion of themselves. From this they may be relieved by the humane and generous interposition of a friend, who will fairly present to them in the light of reason, their real advantages, which the thick cloud of melancholy fancy has hid from them in dreary obscurity.

No. LX. Sept. 1782.

## [ON DEDICATIONS]

*Audivi qui adulare per diminutionem per adorare dictum crederet.*—TURNEBUS.<sup>1</sup>

“I have heard of one who considered adulation as an inferior kind of worship.”

**H**AVING in my last number, treated of Flattery in general, I am in this to treat of the dedication of literary performances, which has come to be looked upon as one of the avowed modes of Flattery.

That a dedication should be Flattery is by no means a proposition inherent in its nature; for where there is real veneration or regard, the debasing epithet of Flattery ought not to be applied to the expression of it. Dedication, in its original meaning, was solemnly devoting to a divinity any work which a nation or an individual had finished, that it might be under the protection of superior power. In time it was found that the immediate protection of the great and opulent, amongst mankind, was very desireable, and as divine honours were actually paid to some princes, it is not to be wondered at that literary performances were gradually attached to elevated patrons. Men of genius have in general stood in need of beneficent favour; and we find, at a very early period of learning, the practice of inscribing their works to men of rank.<sup>2</sup> In the progress of literature we may trace with amusing

<sup>1</sup> Adrien Turnèbe (1512–1565), professor of belles-lettres and of Greek at the University of Toulouse and the Collège Royal and supervisor of Greek texts at the royal press, produced numerous commentaries on various Greek authors, translations of Greek into Latin and French, and philological essays. Montaigne says of him (in the essay *De la Præsumption*): “*Adrianus Turnebus sçavoit plus et sçavoit mieux ce qu'il sçavoit, que homme que fut de son siècle, ny loing au delà.*”

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 2. 268, where Johnson defends the flattery of the stage, or to royalty, as “formular,” concluding—“No modern flattery, however, is so gross as that of the Augustan age, where the Emperour was deified. ‘*Præsens Divus habebitur Augustus.*’” He maintained (*Hebr.*, 325), in opposition to Boswell’s statement here, that “The known style of a dedication is flattery; it professes to flatter. There is the same difference between what a man says in a dedication, and what he says in a history, as between a lawyer’s pleading a cause, and reporting it.” See also *ibid.*, 66, on patronage.

The “beneficent favour” from men of rank was not always forthcoming. In

inquiry the varieties of dedication, according to the different dispositions, and circumstances of different writers.

The most extraordinary dedication of a literary performance is that of *Edwards's Natural History*.<sup>3</sup> It is in these words:

“TO GOD,

“The ONE Eternal! the Incomprehensible! the Omnipresent! Omniscent, and Almighty Creator of all things that exist! from orbs immeasurably great, to the minutest points of matter, this ATOM is dedicated and devoted with all possible gratitude, humiliation, worship, and the highest adoration both of body and mind,

“By his most resigned,  
“Low, and humble creature,

“GEORGE EDWARDS.”

His Preface is solely to justify the propriety of the dedication. He mentions, that people in all ages and places of the world have offered, presented, or sacrificed to the Supreme Being<sup>4</sup> part of the encrease of such good things as he had blessed them with, and he thinks endowments of mind and ability, of penetrating into, and admiring the wonderful works of the Great Creator, are gifts far superior to any others.

Bacon's advancement of learning is dedicated to his sovereign thus—

“There were under the law, excellent King! both daily sacrifices and freewill offerings, the one proceeding upon ordinary observance, the other upon a devout chearfulness. In like manner, there belongeth to Kings from their servants both tribute of duty, and presents of affection. In the former of these, I hope, I shall not live to be wanting according to my

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Johnson's own case, no amount of hinting from enthusiastic readers moved George II to play Augustus to the author of *The Rambler*—possibly because there had been no direct dedication! (*Life of J.*, I. 243.)

<sup>3</sup> George Edwards (1693–1773), naturalist and librarian to the Royal College of Physicians, first gained fame by his colored drawings of birds, made during an extensive tour of Europe. He published three works on natural history, the first two of which (*History of Birds*, 1743–1751, and *Gleanings of Natural History*, 1758–1764) contained six hundred subjects not previously noted. His *Essays of Natural History* appeared in 1770. Boswell quotes the dedication of the *History of Birds*.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “to the Supreme Being” is inserted by direction of a note printed at the end of *Hyp. 61.*

most humble duty, and the good pleasure of your Majesty's employments. For the latter I thought it more respective to make choice of some oblation, which might rather refer to the propriety and excellency of your individual person than to the business of your crown and state."

He then expresses his extreme wonder at the King's "virtues and faculties which the philosophers call intellectual" and expands the praise of his perfections very largely.

The same great man in a dedication of his essays to the Duke of Buckingham, says,

"My *Instauration* I dedicated to the King. My *History of Henry the Seventh*, and my portions of *Natural History* to the prince: And these I dedicate to your grace, being of the best fruits that by the good increase which GOD gives to my pen and labours, I could yield."<sup>5</sup>

The learned and pious *Dr. Henry More*, dedicates his philosophical writings to the *Viscountess Conway*,<sup>6</sup> in the ancient strain of reverence; and in conformity with the notion held forth in the motto to this paper.

"For my own part, it seems to me as real a point of religious worship to honour the virtuous, as to relieve the necessitous, which Christianity terms no less than a sacrifice. Nor is there any thing here of hyperbolism or high-flown language, it being agreed upon by all sides, by prophets, apostles, and ancient philosophers, that holy and good men are the temples

<sup>5</sup> Sir Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1604) was dedicated to King James I in the terms which Boswell quotes. It was to be the first part of his *Instauratio*—the scheme for reorganizing the sciences and restoring man to command over nature; later, Bacon worked it over into *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, the final form of the first division of the *Instauratio*. (The whole work, as Bacon says in his dedication to Buckingham, was dedicated to the king also, but in entirely different terms.) Bacon's *History of Henry VII* was presented to Prince Charles in 1622, followed in 1622–23 by *Historia Vitae et Mortis* and *Historia Ventorum*. The work dedicated to the Duke of Buckingham was the third and augmented edition of Bacon's essays, containing 58 papers (1625).

<sup>6</sup> Anne Conway (née Finch), Viscountess Conway and Kilulta, had been the pupil of Dr. More (1614–1687), the Neo-Platonist, and continued his patroness after her marriage. Their friendship was the result of their common enthusiasm for mystical ideas and experiences; the lady later became a Quaker, and her home a center for the working of spiritualistic miracles. More was a voluminous writer, but little of interest survived him except his *Divine Dialogues* (1688), which summed up his views upon philosophy and religion; his last compositions show the effect of "enthusiastic" fantasies. Boswell quotes the dedication of his *Antidote against Atheism* (3d ed., 1662).

of the living GOD. And verily the residence of divinity is so conspicuous in that heroical pulchritude of your noble person, that Plato, if he were alive again, might find his timorous supposition brought into absolute act, and to the enravishment of his amazed soul might behold virtue become visible to his outward sight."

*Drummond of Hawthornden*, dedicates his history of the five King Jameses of Scotland,<sup>7</sup> "To the Right Honourable my very good LORD and CHIEF, *John Earl of PERTH.*" He celebrates the house of Drummond, from generation to generation, and exulting in the thought that the mother of "that high and great prince" the first of these monarchs was a daughter of it, he thus compliments his patron:

"If we believe some schoolmen, that the souls of the departed have some dark knowledge of the actions done upon earth, which concern their good or evil; what solace then will this bring to James I. that after two hundred years, he had one of his mother's name and race, that had renewed his fame and actions in the world.

*Dryden* in an ample dedication of his poems to the Duke of *Ormond*, by whose father and grandfather he had been patronized, observes, "Some estates are held in England by paying a fine, at the change of every lord;" and in doing homage to his grace, the then lord, he carries on the allusion very prettily. "In his great climaëterick" he dedicates his *Virgil* to Lord *Clifford of Chudleigh*, whose father was "the patron of his manhood;" and he puts his lordship in mind, that in *Rome* "the same plebian houses had recourse to the same patrician line which had formerly protected them." This dedication does Lord Clifford great honour, for it begins, "I have found it not more difficult to translate *Virgil*, than to find such patrons as I desire for my translation."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *The History of Scotland during the Reigns of the Five Jameses* was published in 1655, six years after the death of the author. Drummond had begun the work through an interest in the genealogy of his family, roused by a charge that Robert III, the husband of Annabella Drummond, was illegitimate.

<sup>8</sup> The Duke of Ormonde came of the Irish house of Butler, whose romantic fortunes followed those of the Stuarts. Dryden's first patron in the family was James Butler, first Duke of Ormonde (1610–1688), who followed the Stuarts to France; his son, Thomas Butler, Earl of Ossory (1634–1680), predeceased his father, and the title of second Duke of Ormonde went to young James Butler (1665–1745), to whom Dryden dedicated his *Fables* in 1699. This gentleman

Prior's dedication of his poems to the Earl of Dorset, the son of his patron, is an elegant panegyrick on his lordship's father; and he says, "I send your lordship a dedication not filled with a long detail of your praises, but with the sincerest wishes that you may deserve them."<sup>9</sup> In the same manner Hervey dedicates one of the volumes of his *Meditations*, to *Paul Orchard, Esq. of Stoke-Abbey*, in Devonshire, his godson. There is a most pleasing delicacy to a worthy mind, in such praise of a deceased parent, addressed to a son, on whom it will not fail to "descend as the dew of Hermon."<sup>10</sup>

There is a venerable spirit in the dedication of *Barclay's* apology for the Quakers, to King Charles the Second, dated at *Ury* in Scotland, the place of his pilgrimage. He, with a decent freedom, brings to that monarch's remembrance, his sufferings as a banished man, previous to his exaltation, and faithfully charges

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busied himself in the intrigues to restore James Stuart to the English throne, and spent his life after 1715 in exile on the continent, his great estates being confiscated.

Hugh, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, was the fifth son of Thomas Clifford, first Baron Clifford of Chudleigh (1630–1673), who was lord treasurer of England in the last year of his life, and faithful adherent of the Catholic Duke of York. See for a more exact statement of this dedication than Boswell gives, Johnson's *Life of Dryden*:

In 1697 he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the *Pastorals* to the Lord Clifford, the *Georgicks* to the earl of Chesterfield, and the *Æneid* to the earl of Mulgrave. This œconomy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

"In his great climacterick" is an adaptation of Dryden's own phrase in the dedication to Clifford.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Prior (1664–1721) had been protected from boyhood by the witty Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset (1638–1706), who was a poet in his own right, and who exerted himself to educate Prior after discovering the boy's proficiency in Horace. Three years after his patron's death, Prior dedicated *Poems on Several Occasions* to the heir and only son, Lionel Cranfield Sackville (1688–1765), who was created first Duke of Dorset in 1720; it is largely an encomium of the young Earl's father. Boswell quotes it again in *Hyp. 22*.

Boswell is repeating from memory or copying carelessly; *the* should be *my* before *sincerest wishes*.

<sup>10</sup> *Psalm*, 133. 3. See *Hyp. 2*, 69, for other mention of James Hervey (1714–1758); the dedication to which Boswell alludes, dated 1747, is prefixed to *Contemplations on the Night* (including *The Starry Heavens* and *A Winter-piece*).

him to maintain a proper conduct, and to pay an earnest attention to the important concerns of futurity.<sup>11</sup>

One very fair purpose of a dedication to an eminent person, is to have the weight of his authority in favour of a performance, which the world can be told has had his approbation. Thus, *Denham*, in his dedication of his poems to the King,<sup>12</sup> who he maintains “has as good a title to give law in matters of this nature, as in any other,” says, “they who shall presume to dissent from your Majesty, will do more wrong to their own judgment, than their judgment can do to me.” The “courtly Sprat” as he has been well characterised, dedicates his poems to the Reverend Dr. *Wilkins* of *Oxford*, and holds out as “a shield against prejudices”<sup>13</sup>—“the universal esteem and authority which your judgment and approbation carries with it. “Innumerable instances of such authoritative manifestoes in dedication, might be pointed out. But *Buchanan*, in the dedication of his celebrated version of the Psalms, to Mary Queen of Scots, has, in the genteelst manner, ushered his work into the world, honoured with the good opinion of that beautiful and accomplished princess:

<sup>11</sup> *Theologiae veræ Christianæ Apologia*, or Apology for the True Christian Divinity; by Robert Barclay (1648–1690), was first published in Latin in Amsterdam (1676), and two years later translated into English by the author. It represents the tenets of the Society of Friends, who suffered considerable persecution in Scotland, and was for years regarded as the most important monument of the faith.

Boswell had probably become acquainted with the book during his otherwise unoccupied hours in Corsica; it was one of the five English books in Paoli’s library. See *Journal of a Tour to Corsica*, 169, and *Life of J.*, 2. 524; 4. 137. Johnson carelessly attacked the work in the course of his visit to Mr. Lloyd the Quaker (*Life of J.*, 2. 524), and Boswell records the fact that he was in error.

<sup>12</sup> Sir John Denham (1615–1669), author of *Cooper’s Hill*, brought out his collected poems, with epistle dedicatory to Charles II, in 1668.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Sprat (1635–1713), Bishop of Rochester, Dean of Westminster, and editor of Cowley’s works, was also called *Pindaric Sprat* for his remark on “incomparable Dr. Cowley’s Pindarick way.” He was a close friend of John Wilkins (1614–1672), Bishop of Chester, a man of strong scientific tastes; the two were among the founders of the Royal Society, of which Sprat in 1667 wrote the history. Johnson says of the dedication here mentioned (*Lives of the Poets*):

In 1659, his poem on the death of Oliver was published, with those of Dryden and Waller. In his dedication to Dr. Wilkins he appears a very willing and liberal encomiast, both of the living and the dead.

*Nympha, Caledoniae quæ nunc feliciter oræ  
 Missa per innumeros sceptra tueris avos;  
 Quæ sortem anteuenis meritis, virtutibus annos,  
 Sexum animis, morum nobilitate genus:  
 Accipe (sed facilis) cultu donata Latino  
 Carmina, fatidici nobile regis opus.  
 Illa quidem, Cirrhâ procul & Permesside lymphâ,  
 Pene sub Arctoi fidere nata poli:  
 Non tamen ausus eram malè natum exponere fætum  
 Ne mihi displiceant quæ placuere tibi.  
 Nam quod ab ingenio domini sperare nequibant,  
 Debebunt genio forsitan illa tuo.<sup>14</sup>*

There is, in general, in dedications too much affectation of humility, too much depreciating of what is offered at the shrine of patronage, and yet an indirect anxiety in the writer, to guard against being believed; and therefore the sanction of a better judgement than his own is mentioned in favour of the performance; so that he may have at once the praise of modesty, and of literary excellence.

*Hooke's* dedication of his *Roman History* to *Pope*,<sup>15</sup> is in a

<sup>14</sup> George Buchanan (1506–1582), one of the foremost Latinists of his time, was educated at the University of Paris, and later became a teacher in various European institutions. While instructing at the Portuguese University of Coimbra, he was arrested on charges of heresy, and during his imprisonment in Lisbon began his translation of the Psalms into Latin verse. He was released in 1552; at the time of Mary's marriage to the king of France (1558) he wrote an epithalamium; by 1562 he was installed in Mary's court in Scotland, where he read Livy with her and composed masques in Latin for presentation by the courtiers. In spite of all this, he accompanied Murray into England in 1568 in order to present to Elizabeth the *Detectio* or indictment against Mary Stuart, which he himself had phrased for the rebellious lords. As a reward, no doubt, he was appointed tutor to the infant James VI in 1570.

Dr. Johnson in 1763 “dwelt upon Buchanan’s elegant verses to Mary Queen of Scots” with apparent pleasure (*Life of J.*, I. 533). For further allusion to Buchanan see *Hebr.*, 64 n. 3, and *Hyp.* 17.

The correction *debebunt* for *dedebunt* in the last line was supplied at the end of *Hyp.* 61. An error in the fifth line, however, was overlooked; in the magazine text, *cultu* was printed *culta*, and no change was made by Boswell.

<sup>15</sup> Nathaniel Hooke (d. 1763) studied with Pope at Twyford school, and remained his friend to the end—it was he who called a Catholic priest to hear the poet’s last confession. He is described by Warburton as a mystic and quietist. Of his *Roman History*, “from the Building of Rome to the Ruin of the Com-

peculiar easy style. It is sufficiently complimentary to the patron, and it secures the merit of the writer,

“Sir,

“The displaying your name at the head of these sheets is I confess like hanging out a splendid sign to catch the traveller’s eye, and entice him to make tryal of the entertainment the place affords. But when I can write under my sign, that Mr. POPE has been here, and was content, who will question the goodness of the house.”

I find this subject of Dedication so amusing, to myself at least, that I cannot put an end to it yet, but shall continue to indulge it in another of these papers.

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monwealth,” (4 v., 1738–1771), the first volume was dedicated to Pope. The second volume was dedicated to the Earl of Marchmont, and the last two were published posthumously.

It is this work which helps to compose one of the most charming pictures in the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (190):

It entertained me to observe [Johnson] sitting by, while we danced, sometimes in deep meditation,—sometimes smiling complacently,—sometimes looking upon Hooke’s *Roman History*,—and sometimes talking a little, amidst the noise of the ball, to Mr. Donald M’Queen.

On Hooke’s assistance to the Duchess of Marlborough in writing her memoirs, see *ibid.*, 199.

No. LXI. Oct. 1782.

[ON DEDICATIONS—*Continued*]

*Cæterum sic ipsimet mecum cogitare soleo: Si fallitur qui me laudat, danda mihi opera est ne iterum fallatur, atque interim habenda gratia. Sin autem minime fallitur, aut idem nec etiam fallit atque ita major sum quam mihi fortasse videor— POLITIAN.*<sup>1</sup>

“But I used to think thus with myself: If he who praises me be deceived, “I must endeavour to take care that he be not again deceived, and in the “mean time I am to be thankful. And if he is neither deceived himself, “nor deceives me, and thus I am greater than I perhaps imagined”——

IN THE motto of this paper, *Politian* shews in different views how we may make the best improvement of what praise is bestowed upon us. I have broke the passage abruptly because it would be too long for a motto. The inference to be drawn from the latter part of it is, that when we find ourselves higher in estimation than we apprehended, we should be incited to maintain the character which we have acquired. What he has wisely thought and well expressed upon the subject should be ever present to the minds of those whose situation invites Flattery; amongst whom are certainly to be reckoned the patrons of literary performances, who are addressed in dedication. *Pope* has with poetical imagery exhibited a conspicuous example of inordinate vanity in “full-blown *Bufo*, puff’d by every quill, Fed by soft dedication all day long.”<sup>2</sup> Had *Bufo* been philosopher enough to examine into the justice of the several eulogiums poured out at his shrine, he might have been less the object of the satyrist’s ridicule, and probably have made himself essentially better.

I should be very sorry to discourage the practice of dedication. In one respect it is of great advantage to literature. It is a bill of

<sup>1</sup> Angelo Ambrogini (1454–1494), known as Politianus because of his birth-place Montepulciano, was a scholar patronized by the Medici. He was prominent among the poets who seconded the great Lorenzo’s effort to establish a literature in the vulgar tongue, and in the work which he preferred—studies and translations of the classics—he was one of the dictators. It is probable that Boswell quotes from his *Miscellanea* (1489), a collection of essays on philological subjects and criticism, which was the work most generally known in his own day, and popular long after.

<sup>2</sup> In Prologue to *Satires*, 233.

exchange in the fair commerce between munificence and genius. When great and opulent men patronise men of literary talents, by liberally affording them the means of living easily and happily without application to the coarser methods of gain, they have a good right to be praised; for to them are owing the useful and agreeable productions arising from the cultivation of faculties which but for such patronage might have lain dormant.

“Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest,”<sup>3</sup>

is a line, which though not in its full extent of meaning may have been uttered with probability in many places in every age. “*Si sint Mæcenates non deerint Flacce Marones*—If there are patrons, poets will not be wanting,”<sup>4</sup> is a classical authority for what I am now maintaining. It is a sullen pride which suggests the notion that all dedication is meanness,<sup>5</sup> and which has prevented some writers from it. For there surely cannot be meanness in gratitude, in acknowledging that we have been treated with kindness and generosity. There is no necessity for flattering a patron, and I admit that Flattery, as *Laurentius Valla* elegantly observes,<sup>6</sup> “*servile est non liberale et ingenuum*—is the mark of a servile not of a liberal and ingenuous mind.” But to be announced to the world

<sup>3</sup> Gray’s *Elegy*. See other references to it in *Hyp.* 21, 22, 23 n. 11, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Boswell quotes from memory Martial, 8. 56. 5:

Sint Mæcenates, non derunt, Flacce, Marones.

Boswell’s spelling of *Mecænas* becomes the usual *Mæcenas* in the middle of this essay. See *Hyp.* 55 n. 7 for other instances of inconsistent spelling.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson expressed himself so; cf. *The Rambler*, last number:

The supplications of an author never yet reprieved him a moment from oblivion; and, though greatness has sometimes sheltered guilt, it can afford no protection to ignorance or dulness . . . ; having laboured to maintain the dignity of virtue, I will not now degrade it by the meanness of dedication.

Later in this *Hypochondriack*, Boswell—perhaps remembering Johnson’s disdain of dedication—allows that its absence indicates rather dignity than sullenness; see note 10.

<sup>6</sup> Lorenzo or Laurentius Valla (1406–1457) was an Italian scholar who found patrons in Alphonso V of Aragon and the popes Nicholas V and Calixtus III. He is chiefly famous for his *De falso credita . . . Constantini donatione declamatio*, *De Elegantiis Latinae Linguae*, and *De Voluptate*. In this last work the paganism of the Renaissance was given scholarly and philosophical expression for the first time. I cannot trace Boswell’s quotation to its source.

in a dedication as the Mecænas of a man of genius, is of itself a high gratification; and there are few patrons to whom there cannot, with truth, be displayed many pleasing circumstances of their families, their fortunes, or their personal merits. Great and opulent men, knowing that patronage produces dedication, will naturally be induced to befriend the ingenious, even without any other motive than the love of that fame which arises from patronage itself being well recorded. But when they are also conscious that their characters deserve to be celebrated, they will have a laudable desire to be preserved in the panegyrick of eminent writers, as people are anxious to have their portraits done by painters of superior excellence. A likeness may be equally strong favourably or unfavourably painted. It is therefore of consequence to be looked upon “*placido lumine*—with a pleasing eye,”<sup>7</sup> by those who draw for posterity.

It may seem absurd that men should pay for dedications, while they may be certain that what they purchase is not a sincere tribute of praise.<sup>8</sup> But when it is considered how few know a person’s real character—that fame is often but floating breath, or a series of impressions, upon many minds produced by words, of which the truth is brought to no test, we need not wonder that artificial reputation should be a commodity of constant value. As there are innumerable artists employed in various modes of embellishing our persons, and making them appear more agreeable than they are in reality, so there will always be encouragement given to those who have the skill to adorn our characters. A fine lady orders the particular articles of dress which she thinks will best become her; and I believe on many occasions a patron has suggested the topicks of praise which he would choose in a dedication. I myself knew one instance of this in a gentleman much celebrated by the wits of his time. To keep such lovers of flattering fame in countenance there is the example of no less a man than *Cicero*, who [in] one of his epistles fairly requests that he may have it.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Horace, *Carm.*, 4. 3. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 60 and notes; *Life of J.*, 2. 1 n. 2; 4. 122, end of n. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Originally, “whom one of his epistles fairly requests”; left uncorrected by Boswell. Cicero requested the dedication from M. Tarentius Varro, sending a copy of his own *Academica* with a dedication to Varro as encouragement (*Epist. ad Famil.*, 9. 8).

Dedications are most frequently written in order to please the pride, vanity, or just self-complacence of a patron. But sometimes they are written with a reflex view, to do honour to those who write them; to shew how elegantly they can turn a compliment, or how well they can judge of merit; to shew to the world their real intimacy with the great or the eminent; or to assume an intimacy to which they are not entitled, forwardly beginning, My dear Lord, or My dear Sir, carrying on a petulant freedom, and ending Your affectionate friend. An impertinence of this kind, however disgusting, cannot be avoided. One who has not nerves to be familiar face to face, can insult one with a familiar dedication, as a coward, who would shrink from a close attack, can fire from a distance. A great or an eminent man so treated must find himself in a very awkward situation. He may treat the impertinent fellow with contempt so far as his circle reaches; but in the world at large, and to posterity, if the book has any merit, the dedication will pass unchallenged, for it would be ridiculous to contradict it. All that can be said is, that this does not often happen, and when it does, the great or the eminent must recollect that they are liable to many worse things; that every man is in some degree in the power of another; that this will not do them much harm, and that according to the vulgar proverb “a cat may look at a king.”

Although I do not think there must always be a meanness in dedication, I at the same time allow there is more dignity in not dedicating at all, and I find some respectable writers have shewn they were of this opinion.<sup>10</sup> Some such as Pope, Young, and

<sup>10</sup> Contrast to the statement of the second paragraph, and cf. *Life of J.*, 2. I-2:

He was . . . . at all times ready to give assistance to his friends, and others, in revising their works, and in writing for them, or greatly improving, their Dedications. In that courtly species of composition no man excelled Dr. Johnson. Though the loftiness of his mind prevented him from ever dedicating in his own person, he wrote a very great number of Dedications for others.

In doing so, “he believed he had dedicated to all the Royal Family round.”

David Hume writes in a letter of 1757 that he has at last come to “a Dedication, which may perhaps surprize you, as I never dealt in such servile Addresses . . . . but . . . . it is only to my Friend, Mr. Hume, the Author of *Douglas*” (*Letters of David Hume*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, p. 5).

Addison failed to dedicate his *Cato* from other high motives. The queen expressed herself willing to accept the work, and Addison had already promised the dedication elsewhere; so that he “found himself obliged . . . . by his duty

Thomson, to avoid dedication in form, have introduced it into the performance itself, and some have prefixed a simple inscription, as if there were less obeisance in using the third person than the first, which is as if one should make a bow to a side, instead of bowing straight forward. Yet I cannot think the dignity of any writer lessened by a dedication to his KING, to whom, next to his GOD, respect is to be offered, and to whom all subjects should look up as their protector in all their undertakings. Nor need the proudest man disdain to dedicate to any illustrious society, for in doing so, he admits not that any individual subject is his superior. Thus we see with great propriety *Sir Isaac Newton* dedicating to the Royal Society; Cowley to the University of Cambridge; *Sherlock*, Bishop of London, to the Society of the Temple,<sup>11</sup> and several other such instances, one of which I cannot resist particularly mentioning, it is the learned, worthy, and modest *Ruddiman's* dedication of his Grammar to the Faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh: “*Dominus ac Mæcenatibus suis benignissimus*—his very kind masters and patrons.” It is a dedication which does great honour to that society, at the same time celebrating them as men of genteel birth, of universal learning, and of powerful influence; and he gratefully acknowledges that the office of their librarian, which he had then held for five and twenty years, had enabled him to execute the work which he dedicates. The sentiment and expression of this dedication, is uncommonly excellent and beautiful. I recommend it to the perusal of all my learned readers, and to the most attentive preservation of the society to whom it is addressed.<sup>12</sup>

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on the one hand, and his honour on the other, to send it into the world without any dedication” (Johnson, quoting Tickell, in his *Life of Addison*).

<sup>11</sup> On April 28, 1686, Dr. Vincent presented to the Royal Society the manuscript of *Philosophiae Naturalia Principia Mathematica*, “dedicated to the Society by Mr. Isaac Newton”; the work was published in the following year, with the same dedication.

Abraham Cowley published his collected poetical works in 1656 with an *Elegia Dedicatoria ad illustrissimam Academiam Cantabrigiensem*.

Thomas Sherlock (see *Hyp.* 15) succeeded his father as master of the Temple in 1704. The discourses which he delivered in that capacity were published, and it was probably this publication which bore the dedication to the society.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Ruddiman (1674–1757), Scottish Jacobite and classical scholar, was connected with the Advocates’ Library from about 1700; he became assistant

There indeed cannot possibly be a better motive to dedicate to any patron than that the book owes its composition to his beneficence. Such a testimony of gratitude, while it confers a just reward on an encourager of literature, is a pleasing evidence of goodness of heart in the writer. *Feltham's Resolves*, a book of singular merit, upon many subjects,<sup>13</sup> is dedicated by him "To the Right Honourable my most honoured Lady Mary, Countess Dowager of Thomond." He, in a very gallant strain, tells her ladyship, that it is out of the sense of duty he has aspired to the patronage of her name and dignity, most of these pieces having been composed under her roof, and so born subjects under her dominion—but he allows a further *prerogative*, a higher command—"an empire of affection."

In dedicating literary performances, attention should be paid

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librarian in 1702, librarian in 1730. The work of which Boswell quotes the dedication is probably his *Grammaticae Latinae Institutiones*, published in two parts, 1725–1731; it was a favorite labor, for which he prepared a third part in 1745.

His lesser grammar, *Rudiments of the Latin Tongue* (1714) was long used in the Scottish schools, and he himself was for years accepted as the representative scholar of North Britain. Beside a catalogue of the library, he published an edition of Livy; of Wilson's *De Animi Tranquillitate* (which perhaps Boswell knew by this means—see *Hyp.* 37, 38); of scriptural paraphrases by Arthur Johnston, editor of *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*; of Gavin Douglas' *Aeneid*; of Anderson's *Selectus Diplomatum et Numismatum Scotiae Thesaurus*.

Johnson admired Ruddiman, apparently: he sent compliments to him by Elphinstone; in chiding Boswell later on for bad Latin he said pointedly, "Ruddiman is dead" (*Life of J.*, 2. 24); and in 1773 he offered to assist Boswell's plan to write a biography of the Advocates' librarian (*ibid.*, 2. 248). In a brief charming sketch of Ruddiman (*ibid.*, 1. 244), Boswell says, "His zeal for the Royal House of Stuart did not render him less estimable in Dr. Johnson's eye."

<sup>13</sup> The *Resolves, Divine, Moral, and Political* of Owen Feltham (d. 1668) was so popular—especially among the middle classes of the seventeenth century—that before 1700 it had gone into eleven editions. The work consists of about a hundred short essays, after the manner of Sir Francis Bacon. The first edition (1620) was dedicated to Lady Dorothy Crane, daughter of Lord Hobart; the second, much enlarged (1628), was presented to Lord Coventry. Having been for some time secretary or chaplain to the family of the Earl of Thomond, Feltham dedicated his eighth edition (the first in folio), thoroughly revised, and with fifteen of the essays omitted, to Mary, dowager countess of Thomond. The twelfth edition contained for the first time *A Form of Prayer for the Family of the Rt. Hon. the Countess of Thomond*.

to propriety, so that the work may be suitable to the character of the person to whom it is dedicated. Plays are very properly inscribed to the players who have animated them; sermons to the congregations who have heard them; books in different departments of learning or science to those who excel in them, or at least are fond of them.<sup>14</sup> But it would be preposterous to dedicate Theological Discourses to a profligate, or Anacreonticks to a bishop. *Vertot* dedicates his *History of the Knights of Malta* to *Don Manuel de Vilhena*, then the Grand Master of that order.<sup>15</sup> *Gro-*

<sup>14</sup> Boswell brought principle and practice together in this regard; the dedication which he wrote for the new edition of Hugh Blair's *Shakespeare* (issued by Boswell's first publisher, Alexander Donaldson, in 1771) was addressed to Garrick (*Letters of B.*, 1. 185).

Johnson was so little of such opinion that he replied to the information that a dictionary was to be dedicated to him—"What will the world do but look on and laugh when one scholar dedicates to another?" (*Life of J.*, 4. 186 n. 3). Likewise, when he assisted anyone else by composing a dedication, he had no scruples about propriety between patron and subject, "provided it were innocent," even going so far as to provide compliments to the Duke of York for a work on music for the flute (*Life of J.*, 2. 2). He was, however, aware of such discrepancies, as his comment in the *Life of Addison* shows:

[Addison] wrote the opera of Rosamond, which, when exhibited on the stage, was either hissed or neglected; but, trusting that the readers would do him justice, he published it, with an inscription to the dutchess of Marlborough; a woman without skill, or pretensions to skill, in poetry or literature. His dedication was therefore an instance of servile absurdity, to be exceeded only by Joshua Barnes's dedication of a Greek Anacreon to the Duke.

<sup>15</sup> René-Aubert, Sieur de *Vertot* (1655-1735), cleric, historian, and member of the Académie des Inscriptions, is now regarded as a man of more literary than critical powers, although in his own day he was applauded as a sound scholar on account of his *Histoire de la Conjuration de Portugal* and *Revolutions Romaines*, as well as the work to which Boswell alludes. It was published in Paris (1726), with the cumbrous title, *Histoire des chevaliers hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem, appellez depuis les chevaliers de Rhodes, et aujourd'hui les chevaliers de Malte*. The order, which existed before the Crusades, was known as Knights Hospitallers of Jerusalem until 1309; between 1309 and 1522 it was called Knights of Rhodes; after 1530 it assumed the name Knights of Malta.

Don Antony Manoel de Vilhena, a Castilian (d. 1736), had succeeded without opposition to the Grand-Mastership on the death of the previous commander in 1722. He had entered the order at an early age, and had seen service with the fleet of Tripoli in 1680, rising thereafter through various posts of responsibility; after his succession as Grand Master, he beat off the Turkish fleet from Malta and raised a fort which in 1850 still bore his name. His charities appear to have been generous and sincere. See Porter, *A History of the Knights of Malta*, London 1858.

*tius* dedicates his *Truth of the Christian Religion* to *M. Bignon*, King's Advocate at Paris, as a treatise similar to his usual occupations: “*Audies, testes vim testimoniorum expendes, judicium feres*—you shall hear the witnesses, you shall weigh the force of their testimony, you shall pronounce your judgement.” He says with a nobleness of spirit “*audacem me facet religionis Christianæ tutela*—defending the Christian religion makes me bold.”<sup>16</sup>

For my own part, I own I am proud enough. But I do not relish the stateliness of not dedicating at all. I prefer pleasure to pride, and it appears to me that there is much pleasure in honestly expressing one's admiration, esteem, or affection, in a publick manner, and in thus contributing to the happiness of another by making him better pleased with himself.<sup>17</sup> Nay, one may extend the pleasure by flattering one's self that a dedication will contribute to the happiness of all his connections and descendants; nor do I see any absolute necessity that in every dedication there should be lofty patronage on the one hand, and bowing humility on the other. There may be writers so fortunately situated as not to have stood in need of patronage, and who are therefore at liberty to dedicate to their friends in an agreeable style of equality.<sup>18</sup> I know not if any body ever made love in a dedication, which I think might be very prettily done. But I have met with several dedications purely from friendship. The finest instance that I ever read,

<sup>16</sup> The punctuation of the quotation in the magazine text was left uncorrected by Boswell, though obviously the first Latin sentence should read *Audies testes, vim testimoniorum expendes*, etc.

The *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* (1627) of Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was based on the hope that the “great schism” could be reduced by the agreement of Catholics and Protestants in a common piety; the work offers a code of Christianity irrespective of sect.

Jérôme Bignon (1589–1656), jurist and author of works on law, held various positions of public importance: in 1620 he was made advocate-general to the grand council; in 1626 he became advocate-general to the parliament of Paris; in 1641 he resigned, and a year later was appointed royal librarian by Richelieu.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 59 n. 11; 67 n. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Boswell and Goldsmith both dedicated from motives of friendship. See *Life of J.*, 2. 2 n., 248; and Boswell's dedications to Sir Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Malone (*Life of J. and Hebr.*), in which he explicitly declares that his motive is not flattery but friendship, and that he seeks to establish the authenticity of his works by addressing them to persons familiar with his subject (*supra*, n. 14).

is Addison's dying dedication of his works to Mr. Secretary Craggs,<sup>19</sup> which begins thus: "I cannot wish that any of my writings should last longer than the memory of our friendship, and therefore I thus publickly bequeath them to you, in return for the many valuable instances of your affection."

Nothing can be more disagreeable than to be obliged to change our opinion of those of whom we have publickly expressed a high esteem in a dedication.<sup>20</sup> For how can it be retracted? Horace's maxim, "*Qualem commendes etiam atque etiam respice*"<sup>21</sup>—Consider again and again whom you venture to recommend," is therefore peculiarly necessary to one who is about to dedicate. Some have dedicated to the memory of the great, or of their friends; and thus, though they had not the benevolent pleasure of pleasing, have been secure against a change. *Otway* dedicates his *Windsor Castle* "To the immortal fame of our late dread Sovereign King Charles II. of ever blessed memory." Had he stopped here it had been well. It would have been a disinterested tribute to a departed monarch. But he unluckily adds, "and to the sacred Majesty of the most august and mighty Prince James II. now King, &c."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Addison's dedication to Craggs was printed by Tickell, his literary executor, in the first collection of Addison's works (1721-1726). It was put in Tickell's hands by Addison a "few days before his death"; the address is dated June 4, 1719, and Addison died on June 17. His friend, James Craggs the younger (1686-1721), was the son of a financier patronized by the Duchess of Marlborough; both father and son were implicated in the South Sea Bubble. The younger Craggs, who had met George I in Hanover before his accession to the throne, became secretary for war in 1717, and one of the chief secretaries of state in 1718. He was intimate with the whole circle including Pope, Gay, and Addison.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the censure of Burnett (*Hebr.*, 325) "for his high praise of Lauderdale in a dedication, when he shews him in his history to have been so bad a man." The dedication (of *A Vindication of the Authority . . . of the Church and State of Scotland*) was written in 1673; the *History of his own Time* was begun after 1680.

<sup>21</sup> Boswell quotes from memory *Epist.*, 1. 18.76—"etiam atque etiam adspice."

<sup>22</sup> The whole poem (published posthumously, 1685) is a panegyric of Charles II. The dedication is one of those errors resulting from the exaggeration of a virtue; Johnson says (*Life of Otway*), "He appears by some of his verses

Of this kind of dedication, I have accidentally met with a curious instance prefixed to a pious book printed at Glasgow, in 1749, entitled “Counsels and Comforts to troubled Christians, in eight Sermons. By James Robe, M. A. Minister of the Gospel at Kilsyth;<sup>23</sup> with Treaties on Melancholly, by different Writers, subjoined.” It is thus introduced:

“DEDICATION TO FRIENDSHIP.

“There have been various kinds of dedications of books. This form may come under that of the uncommon, viz. a dedication to the memory of two deceased friends, who lived for some years, until their decease, under my ministry, and who I hope shall be my crown and joy in the day of the Lord. I mean John Campbell, younger, of Shawfield, Esq. and Walter Campbell, General Receiver of his Majesty’s Customs, both sons of Daniel Campbell, of Shawfield, Esq.”

After relating the intimacy of his friendship with them, “embalming and blessing their memory,” by describing their worth, and beseeching their children to endeavour to be such as their parents would rejoice to see them, he cordially concludes, “In the meantime I wait for that happy day when we shall again see each other, and know and love one another in a better manner than in this world we could; when all those infirmities which give sometimes a little interruption to the comfort of the dearest friends in this state of weakness and imperfection shall be done away.”

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to have been a zealous royalist, and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty; he lived and died neglected.”

<sup>23</sup> James Robe (1688–1753) was ordained rector to the Presbyterian parish of Kilsyth in 1713, and in 1740 brought his charge to public attention by an almost hysterical religious revival. In the resulting controversy he published his first work, *A Faithful Narrative of the extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God at Kilsyth and other Congregations near Glasgow* (1742). Boswell evidently obtained the first edition of his *Counsels and Comforts*, probably because of the supplementary “treaties.”

No. LXII. Nov. 1782.

## [ON RIDICULE]

'Ἐς γέλωτα ἔτοεπον τὸ πρᾶγμα.—THUCYDIDES.<sup>1</sup>

“They turned the affair into ridicule.”

“TO DEFINE Ridicule, has puzzled and vexed all the criticks,” says Lord Kaines, in his Elements of Criticism—a book which investigates the principles of taste with much philosophical ingenuity. But although he prides himself in “having happily unravelled the knotty part,”<sup>2</sup> he exhibits a new instance of the truth of the maxim, that “Definitions are dangerous.” For he does not express with clearness what is meant by that faculty. Nor is he aware of the consequence when he admits the celebrated

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of the Pelop. War*, 6. 35. The magazine text gave an unnecessary accent to ἔτοεπον, and omitted the proper accent from τὸ; Boswell made no correction.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell quotes by memory from Part 2, chap. 12:

To define ridicule has puzzled and vexed every critic. The definition given by Aristotle is obscure and imperfect. Cicero handles it at great length, but without giving any satisfaction . . . . and misses the distinction between risible and ridiculous. Quintilian is sensible of the distinction, but has not attempted to explain it. Luckily this subject lies no longer in obscurity: a risible object produces an emotion of laughter merely; a ridiculous object is improper as well as risible; and produces a mixed emotion, which is vented by a laugh of derision or scorn.

Having therefore happily unravelled the knotty part, I proceed to other particulars.

Elsewhere the learned judge continues (Part 2, chap. 2),

Ridicule, which arises chiefly from pride, a selfish passion, is at best a gross pleasure: a people . . . . must have emerged out of barbarity before they can have a taste for ridicule, but it is too rough an entertainment for the polished and refined. . . . Ridicule is banished from France, and is losing ground in England.

Henry Home (1696–1782) assumed the title Lord Kames or Kaines upon ascending the bench as a Lord of Session in 1752. He was a self-made man, having come to his maturity burdened with his father’s debts. He had the widest and liveliest interests, answering David Hume’s philosophical essays in 1751, and writing *Introduction to the Art of Thinking* (1761) and *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774)—in which he maintained that man existed originally in savagery, advancing as a natural result of his powers developed by natural means,—as well as *Elements of Criticism* (1762). In this work he endeavored to explain the existence of artistic standards, arguing that the impressions made by the fine arts result from reasoning as well as feeling, and depend on certain fundamental laws resulting from the presence in all men of common elements; good taste is our sensitiveness to these laws—good judgment, the product of our reasonable examination of a work by such standards. See criticisms of the *Elements* in *Life of J.*, 1. 455; 2. 103; *Boswelliana*, 278. For Boswell’s friendship with the author, see *Letters of B.*, Index, under KAMES.

proposition of a noble author, that Ridicule is the test of truth.<sup>3</sup> He speaks of a *sense of Ridicule* as independent, and not at all under the control of judgement. Whereas, if that were the case, a wise man would not have the advantage over a fool which he now has, and to which he is undoubtedly entitled. We need not wonder that one who has written upon so many subjects should sometimes miss his aim.

By Ridicule I understand a faculty of representing any object as at once ridiculous and contemptible, whether it be so in its own nature or not. This may be done either by falsely adjoining qualities to it, or by magnifying out of all proportion some of its qualities, and keeping others out of sight.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, if one mischievously pins a dirty rag to the best looked and best dressed person in a publick assembly, as "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,"<sup>5</sup> this one mean circumstance of ridi-

<sup>3</sup> "Hence a celebrated question, whether ridicule is or is not a test of truth? . . . A man of true taste sees the subject without disguise: but if he hesitate, let him apply the test of ridicule, which separates it from its artificial connections, and exposes it naked with all its native improprieties."—*Elements of Criticism*, 2. 12.

This was a celebrated question, the cause of ridicule finding its chief expression in the *Characteristics* of Lord Shaftesbury. The theory was attacked frequently by French writers of the period, and denied by men of breeding or common sense in England; see Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, 2. 490, 656, and Johnson's comments in his *Life of Akenside*:

He adopted Shaftesbury's foolish assertion of ridicule for the discovery of truth. For this he was attacked by Warburton and defended by Dyson. . . .

The result of all the arguments which have been produced in a long and eager discussion of this idle question, may easily be collected. If ridicule be applied to any position as a test of truth, it will then become a question whether such ridicule be just; and this can only be decided by the application of truth, as a test of ridicule. Two men, fearing, one a real and the other a fancied danger, will be for a while equally exposed to the inevitable consequences of cowardice, contemptuous censure, and ludicrous representation; and the true state of both cases must be known, before it can be decided whose terror is rational, and whose is ridiculous; who is to be pitied, and who to be despised. Both are for a while equally exposed to laughter, but both are not therefore equally contemptible.

<sup>4</sup> To Johnson this was the mere exaggeration of a form of humor which could have corrective uses (cf. *Life of J.*, 4. 20):

The man who uses his talent of ridicule in creating or grossly exaggerating the instances he gives, who imputes absurdities that did not happen, or when a man was a little ridiculous describes him as having been very much so, abuses his talents greatly. The great use of delineating absurdities is, that we may know how far human folly can go; the account, therefore, ought of absolute necessity to be faithful.

See also n. 19 below.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor., 5. 6.

cule will destroy the effect of all the perfection natural and artificial. In the same manner if a wicked rogue shall create a belief of extreme vanity or self-conceit being inherent in the highest character, the malignant influence will operate with equal strength. Yet, in both these cases, the circumstances of ridicule do not belong to the objects but are superinduced. And if the wisest man has a red nose, a large belly, or a pair of long lank legs perpetually pointed out as his characteristick, the respect which he ought to have, will be lost in the risibility excited by a strong ludicrous idea.

I speak of the generality of mankind who have not from study and habit the vigorous use of judgement to counteract such ludicrous influence. The Roman poet frankly admits "*Simia quam similis turpissima bestia nobis*—how like to us is the ape, the basest of animals."<sup>6</sup> And the truth is, that the generality of mankind are as prone to grinning laughter at trifles as monkeys are. Such is the *sense of Ridicule*, to which if we should trust the test of the first principles of human nature, we should be contemptible indeed, and there would be an end of that dignity which we certainly can conceive, of which we have in every age some instances, and to which we should all aspire.<sup>7</sup>

What I have said as to persons will apply to things, to subjects of every consideration, even the most valuable and sacred, which, fictions added, or particular parts distorted by enlargement, will make quite different in the view of most observers. How has the useful and agreeable subordination of civil society from the monarch to the lowest subjects, how has the grand and comfortable system of religion, been made to appear absurd to many who had

<sup>6</sup> By "Roman poet" Boswell means Horace, to whom he ascribes the line in *Hyp. 20*; it is, however, drawn from Ennius, according to Cicero (*De Nat. Deorum, I. 35*).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Johnson's defense of the *sense of ridicule* (*Life of J., 3. 431*):

On . . . Good-Friday, I visited him in the morning as usual; and finding that we insensibly fell into a train of ridicule upon the foibles of one of our friends, . . . I, by way of check, quoted some good admonition from *The Government of the Tongue*, that very pious book. It happened also remarkably enough, that the subject of the sermon preached . . . by Dr. Burrows, was the certainty that of the last day we must give an account of "the deeds done in the body;" and, amongst various acts of culpability he mentioned evil-speaking. As we were moving slowly along in the crowd from church, Johnson jogged my elbow, and said, "Did you attend to the sermon?" "Yes, Sir, (said I,) it was very applicable to *us*." He, however, stood upon the defensive. "Why, Sir, the sense of ridicule is given us, and may be lawfully used. The authour of *The Government of the Tongue* would have us treat all men alike."

faculties fitted only to submit, not to understand? An astronomer, gazing at the sky for hours in the night through a tube, may be easily made the sport of a foolish clown who has not the least notion of what is thus to be learned. A holy hermit, abstaining from sensual gratifications of high relish, and devoting himself for hours to religious exercises, may be looked upon with scorn by a fine gentleman, who is as ignorant of piety as a clown is of astronomy, who perceives only starving, watching, and kneeling, and knows not the sublime enjoyments of spiritual delight, or the enlarged benevolence of intercession at the throne of Heaven with which the saint is animated.

It is true we are told by *Horace*, when describing the talents of *Lucilius* as a writer,<sup>8</sup>

“*Ridiculum acri  
Fortius ac melius magnas plerumque secat res.*

For, Ridicule shall frequently prevail,  
And cut the knot when graver reasons fail.”

FRANCIS.

But to cut with this weapon is not very safe. For we know that it is by no means like the spear of Ithuriel,<sup>9</sup> but will cut indiscriminately, right or wrong. In the Old Testament we find the Prophet Elijah employing it very successfully against the priests of Baal till they in despair cut *themselves* with knives; but in the New and better Testament there is not the slightest appearance of it upon any occasion. I am therefore always offended when I find it used in religious controversy, which is too frequent in the writings of Protestants against Roman Catholicks, where it is not a bit fairer than when used by Deists against Christians in general. Let doctrines be tried by evidence and by reasoning, not by Ridicule, which, the more exalted and solemn the subject is, has the greater advantage.

There is, however, a clear distinction between that gay and

<sup>8</sup> *Sat.*, I. 10. 14. For a biographical note on Philip Francis see *Hyp.* 66 n. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Paradise Lost*, 4. 810.

For the figure which Boswell here employs, cf. *Boswelliana*, 213:

Sir W. Maxwell said he was always afraid of a clever man till he knew if he had good nature. “Yes,” said Boswell; “when you see a clever man you see a man brandishing a drawn sword, and you are uneasy till you know if he intends only to make it glitter in the sun, or to run you through the body with it.”

pleasant species of argument, which, as it were by throwing more light upon a subject, makes error more evident, and that scoffing Ridicule which raises the passion of pride like a tempest, and disturbs the fair power of judging. In the first case he who is to judge smiles. In the second he sneers. In the first he views his neighbour with a complacent condescension; in the second with an insolent contempt.

“And coxcombs vanquish Berkeley with a grin,”

is a very just line in Dr. Brown of Carlisle’s Poetical Essay on Satire.<sup>10</sup> That would not be the case were wise men the judges, before whom the sallies of Ridicule would pass like the tricks of a mountebank. But as ten of mankind can be tickled with what is ludicrous for one that can separate and determine with penetration and sagacity, Ridicule is therefore to be voluntarily checked by worthy men who are possessed of it,<sup>11</sup> and to be restrained in the unprincipled by some other sense of awe or of interest, in every case where its effect may be to lessen the reverence which ought to be entertained for important truths or elevated stations.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. John Brown (1715–1766) was chiefly famous for his *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757–58), for which see Introduction, III. 1. His *Essay on Satire* (ca. 1743) brought him to the attention of Warburton, to whom it was addressed, and as a result his poem was printed as a supplement to the *Satires* in Warburton’s edition of Pope’s works. Brown was also the author of an *Essay on the Characteristics of Lord Shaftesbury* (1751); two tragedies—*Barbarossa* (1754) and *Athelstane* (1756); an *Additional Dialogue of the Dead between Pericles and Cosmo* (1760); and a *Dissertation on the Rise, Union, Power &c., of Poetry and Music* (1763).

In his *Estimate . . . of the Times*, Brown asserted that the English had nearly lost their cause in the uprising of 1745 because they were enfeebled to the point of cowardice by luxury; he traced to the same fact the frequent suicides among the gloomy English (see *Hyp.* 51 n. 3). He himself had acted as a volunteer in the defense of Carlisle, where he was minor canon and lecturer, in 1745, but nothing so became his criticisms of English life as his leaving of it: in a fit of melancholy he committed suicide on Sept. 23, 1766.

<sup>11</sup> A reminder to Boswell himself; cf. *Hyp.* 23, 42, and notes. It was Johnson who first gave Boswell the notion that constant raillery was pernicious; in a letter from Boswell to Temple in 1763 he is quoted thus (*Letters of B.*, I. 30):

He said . . . that accustoming one’s self to view things always in a ludicrous light was of most dangerous consequence. It destroys serious thinking, and unhinges the mind.

See also *The Idler*, 18, and Chesterfield’s advice in his *Letters*, I. 164; 2. 640.

Man has been denominated by one of the ancient philosophers "a risible animal,"<sup>12</sup> and I should be sorry to counteract his natural propensity: But there may be a deal of laughter without Ridicule, though some have maintained contempt to be an essential ingredient in it, a proposition which I am certain is not true.<sup>13</sup> There may be innumerable sportive flights of a playful imagination which only exhilarate for the moment. But cutting Raillery, depreciating Sarcasm, or any mode of Ridicule which destroys real good qualities is to be avoided as poison.

As there is no metal but what has some dross in it, so there is nothing human so perfect but there may be something ridiculous discovered in it, if, like Satan, we "desire to sift it as wheat."<sup>14</sup> Buffoons, reversing the noble purpose of the alchymist in transmutation, endeavour to debase the substance which is unlucky enough to be brought into their crucible, and are but too successful. I have been vexed with instances of this which have fallen within my own sphere.<sup>15</sup> Even a good man who has a luxuriance of

<sup>12</sup> A favorite allusion; see *Hyp.* 42, 44. Boswell refers to Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium*, 3. 10:

That man alone is affected by tickling is due first to the delicacy of his skin, and secondly to his being the only animal that laughs.

See also the verses of Rabelais *Aux Lecteurs*, preceding his *Gargantua*:

Mieulx est de ris que de larmes escripe  
Pour ce que rire est le propre de l'homme.

For other characterizations of man on the part of Boswell and his circle, cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 278; *Hebr.*, 36 n.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 24 n. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Luke*, 22. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Boswell is thinking of such grievances when writing his paragraph on English and Scottish satire in *Boswelliana*, 287:

The difference between satire in London and in Scotland is this:—In London you are not intimately known, so the satire is thrown at you from a distance, and however keen, does not tear and mangle you. In London the attack on the character is clean boxing. In Scotland it is grappling. They tear your hair, scratch your face, get you down in the mire, and not only hurt but disfigure and debase you.

See also the remark on "good humoured English pleasantry" (*Hebr.*, 294). Boswell's father frequently presented instances of ridicule which vexed his son; *Boswelliana* is full of his dour jests, and in a letter to Temple, Boswell complains that Lord Auchinleck had written to him "with that Scots strength of sarcasm which is peculiar to North Briton" (*Letters of B.*, 1. 127). In Boswell's later life he was subjected to at least two coarse practical jokes, probably typical of

Ridicule in his mind is at times betrayed into such instances for which he is afterwards heartily sorry. Dean Swift, I am persuaded, upon many occasions felt a severe regret for sallies of Ridicule that broke from him unseasonably, and lessened his authority as a clergyman.<sup>16</sup> There is great difficulty in preserving the boundaries between what is grave and what is ridiculous; and although *Calamy* tells us of *Wild*, a presbyterian minister, who was remarkable for facetiousness and being what is called a boon companion, that "he was very serious in serious things," which is so far much to be praised, I doubt that his seriousness would, at least in the suspicion of others, be too much tinged with the ridiculous.<sup>17</sup>

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the manners of his circle; see *Letters of B.*, 2. 377 ff. for the loss of his wig while visiting at Lowther, and Fitzgerald, *Life of B.*, for the anecdote of *Quaere adhaesit pavimentum*—a contemptuous play on Boswell's pitifully sordid drinking habits. This last instance, by far the cruelest, was unfortunately an example of *English pleasantry*.

<sup>16</sup> Boswell's persuasion receives some support from the evidence of Theophilus Swift, a relative of the Dean (*Swiftiana*, 2. 229):

The following story the Dean himself told my father, and probably intended it as a hint to him not to do boyish tricks, of which no good can come; but from which some inconvenience may arise. The Dean being to dine with Mr. Harley, was shown into the dining parlour. The silver plates were airing at the fire; the Dean hears, or thinks he hears, Mr. Harley's voice, and imagines he is coming into the room as the door opens. At that moment he affects to steal one of the silver plates, and pretends to hide it under his cassock, that Harley might perceive him in the act of secreting it. But what was his surprise, when a perfect stranger enters the room! What he affected to do openly, he is now in good earnest forced to do covertly; and he continues in torture till Mr. Harley enters; he then unbosoms his theft, and is forced to make an awkward apology for his folly. He declared to my father, that he never suffered so much anxiety in his life, lest, by any accident, a corner of the plate should discover itself to the stranger.

On another occasion Swift seems to have had no compunctions—perhaps because the joke succeeded! (*ibid.*, 2. 228):

Swift one very dark night, having by some accident staid out to a late hour, going home in a hackney coach with Sheridan and four other clergymen, all of them in their gowns and cassocks . . . , ordered the coachman to set them down at a certain corner, where . . . there was no light from any lamp. The coachman opens the door; they deliberately alight one by one; but, having left the other door open, they go round the coach, and enter it again successively, till the coachman, terrified out of his wits at the descent of so many parsons, runs off, crying out, "The Devil! the Devil! the Devil!"

<sup>17</sup> The tone of this remark, and the quotation, imply a long familiarity with Calamy's characterization of Wild; in truth Boswell's acquaintance with the whole subject goes back no farther, probably, than a few weeks, and is merely third-hand information drawn from the London Magazine itself. In August 1782 a poem by Wild was printed in the Magazine, introduced as follows:

A correspondent some time since sent you a very curious and much-admired *Love-Song*

But it is not the Ridiculous considered only as a laughable quality that I intend as the subject of this paper. It is Ridicule which I have already observed comprehends contempt, and for that reason is noxious. It is vain to argue, as many have done, that Ridicule can make nothing contemptible that is not really so. It is true it cannot do it essentially in the opinion of the judicious. But in the opinion of levity and inconsideration it changes a subject, it *turns it* into Ridicule as my motto bears,<sup>18</sup> a phrase which is not only a good expression in the Greek of Thucydides, but is a common colloquial idiom in our own and other modern languages, a sure proof that it is a just one.

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written by a Puritan Minister. I have taken the liberty of sending you a witty poem, by a divine of the same class; and whose name, like Mr. Jonathan Hanmer's, may be found in Calamy's history of Non-conformity. . . . .

The poem is headed, "Upon seeing some bottles of claret laid in sand, and covered with a sheet. By Dr. Wild, a Presbyterian preacher of the time of Oliver Cromwell," and a note is subjoined as follows:

Dr. Wild, like Archdeacon Mapes . . . was as jolly a Bacchanalian as ever put on a grave face in the pulpit, when preaching on the virtues of temperance. Dr. Wild was, in one word, the *Anacreon of the Presbyterians*.

An indignant protest to this representation, published in the London Magazine for October 1782, antedated by only one month the essay by Boswell, printed in the November number. This communication supplied Boswell with his phrasing:

To the Editor of the London Magazine:

Sept. 19, 1782.

SIR:

YOUR impartiality will lead you to rescue a worthy character, which is aspersed . . . in your miscellany of August. . . . Your correspondent refers to Calamy's History of Non-conformity (instead of his account of the ejected ministers) for the character of Dr. Wild. I have looked into the book, and find it thus written: "Dr. Wild was a witty man, and very pleasant in conversation. His performances in poetry are well known. Mr. Wood (viz. of Oxford) says, 'He was a fat jolly man, and boon presbyterian.'" The Doctor immediately adds, "I heard him commended by those that knew him, not only for his facetiousness, but also his very strict temperance and sobriety, and his being very serious in serious things; so that, if any thing contrary to this was intended to be insinuated by that reflexion, it is a wrong to his memory." Is not this account sufficient to take off the scandal . . . ?

I am, Sir, your constant reader, and occasional correspondent,

A CONSISTENT DISSENTER.

<sup>18</sup> See *Hyp.* 42 n. 2 for another occurrence of this idiom.

The transformation of which Boswell speaks here is also the subject of a paragraph in *Boswelliana*, 269:

Dempster said that Cullen the mimick was to men's characters like wax to intaglios—to seals cut inwards: That men had particularities, but that we did not perceive them till the impressions of them were shown, reversed, bold, and prominent . . . by Cullen's mimickry.

Ridicule, I own, is no small gratification to those who can command it; for it gratifies at once risibility and pride, both of which are strong in human nature: and I would allow of some indulgence in it in cases where one has first settled by consideration that contempt can do no hurt, but perhaps good. There are many cases which are fair game for Ridicule merely as sport,<sup>19</sup> and others which require it as a corrective, as is well expressed in a late prologue:

“Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,  
“And checked (if checked) by Ridicule alone.”<sup>20</sup>

But to have prurient powers of Ridicule of which one has not the command, and which, unrestrained by reason, run wild upon all occasions, is certainly a great misfortune; for they not only get one many enemies who are keenly exasperated, but prevent the grave enjoyments of study, esteem, and admiration, which are far superior to the ticklings and convulsions of contemptuous risibility. Ridicule *crescit indulgens sibi*—grows by indulgence.<sup>21</sup> When excessive, it is a kind of mental drunkenness. It throws every object, whether great or beautiful, into one undistinguished mass of grotesque appearance. It exhausts the spirits to weariness, and

<sup>19</sup> Cf. n. 4 above, and *Life of J.*, 3. 385:

We . . . joined in a hearty laugh at some ludicrous but innocent peculiarities of one of our friends. BOSWELL. “Do you think, Sir, it is always culpable to laugh at a man to his face?” JOHNSON. “Why, Sir, that depends upon the man and the thing. If it is a slight man, and a slight thing, you may; for you take nothing valuable from him.”

See also *ibid.*, 4. 211:

Johnson said, “A man should pass a part of his time with *the laughers*, by which means any thing ridiculous or particular about him might be presented to his view, and corrected.”

Boswell in one instance implies a defense of ridicule as the cause of witty play (*Boswelliana*, 208):

A stupid fellow was declaiming against that kind of raillery called *roasting*, and was saying, I am sure I have a great deal of good nature; I never roast any. “Why, sir,” said Boswell, “you are an exceedingly good-natured man, to be sure; but I can give you a better reason for your never roasting any. Sir, you never roast any, because you have got no fire.”

<sup>20</sup> Boswell is either quoting mistakenly from memory, or countenancing a plagiarism; the lines (from Pope’s *Epilogue to the Satires*, 2. 208 ff.) properly run thus—

Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see  
Men not afraid of God, afraid of me;  
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,  
Yet touched and shamed by Ridicule alone.

<sup>21</sup> Horace, *Carm.*, 2. 2. 13.

at last makes one fully sensible of the truth of the wise man's remark, "I said of laughter it is sad."<sup>22</sup>

I am possessed of an excellent large folio Dutch book of Emblems, by *Jacob Catts*. The designs and engravings are remarkably good, and the morals are given in verse in different languages as well as in that of *Vaderland*,<sup>23</sup> as Holland is affectionately designed by her steady native. There is in this book a very just admonition against a thoughtless indulgence of Ridicule. A line of persons are walking along in succession in different dresses. The second is laughing at the first, the third at the second, and the finger of scorn is pointed by each behind the others back, through the whole line, while it is evident to the Spectator that not one of them has a better reason for sport than the other, and that he who laughs at his neighbour, is in his turn as much laughed at, without his being at all conscious of it. Indeed they who are most apt to exercise ridicule, are often most ridiculous themselves, and were this to be inculcated upon them it is to be hoped they would conduct themselves with more caution and moderation.

<sup>22</sup> Boswell quotes from memory *Eccl.*, 2. 2—"I said of laughter, It is mad." This quotation is used also in *The Spectator*, 249, an essay which, I am inclined to think, may have been Boswell's inspiration for the topic. A résumé shows that aside from the conclusion, which discusses the forms of ridicule in literature, it covers most of the points made by Boswell:

Man a risible species—Hobbes on pride in laughter—I said of laughter, It is mad—ridicule slackens and unbrates the mind—offers relief from gloom, and hence should not be lost—talent of ridicule found in small ungenerous minds—every character has blemishes, but why point them out?—if ridicule were used to correct vice and folly, it would be of use to the world—(conclusion).

<sup>23</sup> *Jacob Catts* (1577–1660), born at Brouwershaven in Zeeland, was one of the creators of the Dutch language and poetry, the contemporary and leader of Hooft and Vondel. He was so popular as to be called *Vader Catts*, and his works were alluded to as the Bible of Youth. In the fashion of his period, his works are chiefly emblems, allegories, songs, etc. An edition of his works in three languages simultaneously was brought out at Amsterdam in 1622, while he yet lived; it was probably a copy of this that Boswell owned. Catts was also in the diplomatic service, representing Holland in England in 1627 and 1651.

No. LXIII. Dec. 1782.

## [ON HYPOCHONDRIA]

“Οσον δ' ἀν ἀτρεμήσῃ ὁ ἐγκέφαλος χρόνον, τοσοῦτον καὶ φρονεῖ ὁ ἀνθρωπος. —HYPPOCRATES.<sup>1</sup>

“When the brain is quiet, then is a man wise.”

I HAVE for so long a time been free of the direful malady from which the title of this periodical paper is taken, that I almost begin to forget that I ever was afflicted with it; and as Philip of Macedon had one, who every morning when he awaked, put him in mind that he was a man,<sup>2</sup> it may become necessary for me to be put in mind that I am an Hypochondriack. I desire to be sincerely grateful to GOD, for the ease and comfort which I now enjoy; and as in a plenteous season one should provide against scarcity, and in the time of health against sickness, so while my mind is clear, let me think of means by which the clouds which will probably gather again may be dissipated.

As a treasure upon the subject which is most chiefly interesting to them, I recommend to my fellow sufferers from *Hypochondria*, one of the most curious books that ever was compiled, “*The Anatomy of Melancholy*,” by *Robert Burton*, an Oxonian, of the learned age of James I. He assumes the name of *Democritus, junior*, as the author of this wonderful performance, which is indeed an aggregate of more variety of thinking both ancient and modern, in the very words of innumerable writers, than has ever been brought together by any one man. I have the sixth edition of this work, printed at London in 1660. It is a thick folio consisting of seven hundred twenty-three pages, besides seventy eight of a prefatory address to the reader. It has every species of melancholy, its causes and its cures minutely delineated, and abounds not only

<sup>1</sup> Hippocrates, *The Sacred Disease*, 17. 25. Boswell left no correction for his spelling of the author's name, either in this place or in the middle of the essay, where he renders it *Hypocratus*. Errors in the passage quoted, which Boswell also left uncorrected, were these: δε was given for δ'; ἀν for ἀν; ἀτρεμησῃ for ἀτρεμήσῃ; εγκεφαλος for ἐγκέφαλος; φρονε for φρονεῖ; χρόνον and τοσοῦτον were given without accent.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 14 n. 3. For the history of Boswell's hypochondria, see *Hyp.* 1 n. 12.

in learning, but in vivacity; tinctured, however, with what many would now call the superstition of the time in which he lived. In that very entertaining collection "Granger's Biographical History of England," we are told "He composed this book with a view of relieving his own melancholy: but increased it to such a degree, that nothing could make him laugh but going to the bridge foot, and hearing the ribaldry of the bargemen, which rarely failed to throw him into a violent fit of laughter. Before he was overcome with this horrid distemper, he, in the intervals of his vapours, was esteemed one of the most facetious companions in the University. His epitaph at Christ Church, in Oxford, intimates, that excessive application to his celebrated work, was the occasion of his death. *Paucis notus, paucioribus ignotus, hic jacet Democritus, Junior, cui vitam dedit & mortem melancholia.*" The meaning of this epitaph, penned with conceit, is—"Known intimately to a few, unknown by fame to still fewer, here lies *Democritus, Junior*, to whom melancholy made to live in extensive reputation, and occasioned his natural death." He concludes his Anatomy of Melancholy with these short admonitions, the last of which is most proper for me at present "*Sperate miseri, cavete felices.*—Let the wretched hope and the happy take care." I believe the book is become very scarce. I should think a new edition of it would be acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

There is too general a propensity to consider *Hypochondria* as altogether a bodily disorder, and I lately got from France a

<sup>3</sup> Johnson thought highly of this work, in spite of his comment that it was "overloaded with quotation" (*Life of J.*, 2. 504); he admitted that it was the only book which ever got him out of bed earlier than he had intended (*ibid.*, 2. 138), and recommended it to Boswell in the course of a conversation on hypochondria (*ibid.*, 2. 504). In a letter of 1779 Johnson quotes to Boswell some of the concluding lines of Burton: "The great direction which Burton has left to men disordered like you, is this, *Be not solitary; be not idle*" (*Life of J.*, 3. 471).

For Granger's *Biographical History*, which Boswell also read for routing hypochondria, no doubt, see *Letters of B.*, 1. 255; *Hebr.*, 290. See also *Hyp.* 6 n. 17, for an account of the *Biographia Britannica*, dear to Boswell for the same reason.

The curious sentence structure of Boswell's translation of the epitaph probably comes from his hurried effort to interpret word for word, as well as translate. He might have spared himself trouble by rendering the last clause as simply as the original gives it: *to whom melancholy has given life and death.*

very ingenious little treatise upon it, published in 1779, entitled, “*Recherches sur la Cause des Affections Hypocondriaques. Par M. Claude Revillon, Docteur en Medecine,*” which professes to manage vapours in the human constitution, with the same facility that a good naturalist commands air to come and go in any material substance, and it may be useful to many patients. There is no doubt a kind of *Hypocondria*, which although the mind be in some degree affected, is merely corporeal, and may be removed, by exercise. Of this kind, *Churchill* says, in his *Gotham*:

“Thus the shrewd doctor in the spleen struck mind,  
When pregnant horror sits and broods o'er wind,  
Discarding drugs, and striving how to please,  
Lures on insensibly by slow degrees  
The patient to those manly sports which bind,  
The slacken'd sinews and relieve the mind.  
The patient feels a change as wrought by stealth,  
And wonders on demand to find it health.”<sup>4</sup>

And in the last poem of an anonymous collection, printed for *Gillyflower* in Westminster-Hall, 1694, I find the following couplet:

“Physicians in this malady abjure;  
“Seek not the *Wells* but *Gallies* for thy cure.”

Of the epistles of Hypocratus there is one entitled “Περὶ μανίης λόγος, A Discourse concerning Madness,” from which I have taken the motto of this paper. He tells us that the brain is disturbed either by phlegm or by bile.<sup>5</sup> That the first produces dull madness, the latter produces furious madness, and he recommends

<sup>4</sup> Boswell left uncorrected the absurd punctuation visited upon the passage in the magazine text. The original of course reads (2. 129 ff.)—

.... those manly sports which bind  
The slacken'd sinews, and relieve the mind.

<sup>5</sup> *The Sacred Disease* (Περὶ ἱερῆς νούσου), 18. 1:

The corruption of the brain is caused not only by phlegm but by bile. You may distinguish them thus. Those who are mad through phlegm are quiet, and neither shout nor make a disturbance; those maddened through bile are noisy, evil-doers and restless, always doing something inopportune.

Bile heats the brain, and phlegm chills it. In the last part of the treatise, the physician observes that either form of the disease

consumes itself and is destroyed by what is contrary to it. Whoever can produce such a change in man, and can by regimen render the body of the subject moist or dry or warm or cold, is

different medical treatment accordingly. But there is doubtless a madness seated much deeper, a disorder in the mind itself, which neither the most potent medicines nor most violent exercise can remove. That man is composed of two distinct principles, body or matter, and mind, I firmly believe; and that these mutually act one upon another, is, I think, very certain.<sup>6</sup> That the body influences the mind is commonly admitted; and it is equally certain that the mind influences the body; a doctrine elegantly illustrated by the late *Dr. Nichols*, in his *Oration de anima Medica*.<sup>7</sup> *Dr. Battie*, in his *Treatise on Madness*,<sup>8</sup> a book sufficiently corporeal, allows *original* madness to be incurable, or that which is owing to a fault in the first formation of the organs, while he maintains

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capable of curing this malady by practical means, without purifications, magic devices, and all such charlatanism.

Boswell gives a paraphrase of the Greek title, evidently quoting from memory; he left no correction for the original text, which omitted accents from περὶ and μανίης and gave λογός for λόγος.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 6, 48, 67. For the influence of body on mind, see *Hyp.* 26, 38, 39, and notes.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Frank Nichols (1699–1778), lecturer at Oxford on anatomy, demonstrated the minute structure of blood-vessels, and observed that the arteries were supplied with nerves. He was a member of various learned associations and traveled in France and Italy. In 1739 he delivered the Harveian oration, and in 1748–1749 the Lumleian lectures, of which the initial lecture was *De Anima Medica*; it was published in 1750. See *Life of J.*, 3. 186:

[Johnson] told us "that whatever a man's distemper was, Dr. Nichols would not attend him as a physician, if his mind was not at ease; for he believed that no medicines would have any influence. . . ."

Dr. Nichols became physician to the King in 1753, but was later dismissed by Lord Bute for political reasons, in spite of his eminence in his profession (*Life of J.*, 2. 406).

<sup>8</sup> Dr. William Battie (1704–1776) practiced and lectured at Cambridge, published editions of Aristotle and Isocrates, and delivered the Lumleian lectures (*De Principiis Animalibus*) in 1751–1757. He was physician to St. Luke's Hospital until 1764, and proprietor of a large private lunatic asylum. His *Treatise on Madness* (1758), which dealt with the causes of insanity and the care of patients, was attacked by a rival physician because of Battie's remark that doctors kept their methods to themselves too much, and would not teach by text or clinic. In 1763 Battie was examined before a committee of the House of Commons on the regulation of private mad-houses, and his evidence on the shocking state existing in most of them contributed much to the bill regulating such institutions, passed in 1774.

that *consequential* madness, owing to some accidental hurt or disorder, may be cured. But it will be found, upon a fair enquiry, that many cases of supervenient madness, both dull and furious, have baffled all the art and power of physick. The unfortunate incurables in St. Luke's Hospital, which I have visited out of sad curiosity,<sup>9</sup> are not all the victims of native insanity.

It was once proposed to me as a difficult problem, by an elegant lady of good understanding, but subject to Hypochondria, how to account for that complaint, being sometimes most uneasy when one is to all appearance in the best health.<sup>10</sup> My solution of this problem, is, that often when there are no visible symptoms of bodily disorder, the finer parts, the nerves, or the nervous fluid, or whatever is the exquisite seat of sensation and sensibility, may be hurt and fretted, of the effects of which, in variety of degrees, every person of any delicacy of feeling has had experience: or the mind may be sick, it may be "full of scorpions,"<sup>11</sup> or have "a pale cast of thought" altogether unconnected with the state of the body. "*Mens sana*—a healthful mind" is quite distinct from "*corpore sano*—a sound body;"<sup>12</sup> and when the mind is sick it is certain that bodily pain is a relief by diverting the attention from a deeper to a slighter distress.

<sup>9</sup> This was the hospital with which Dr. Battie had been connected (see note above). In 1775 Boswell and Johnson went together to visit Bedlam; Johnson had been there once before. Boswell observes, ". . . the general contemplation of insanity was very affecting. I accompanied him home and dined and drank tea with him." For a note on the eighteenth-century practice of making such tours as a form of diversion, see the note to this passage—*Life of J.*, 2. 429.

On disorders provoking insanity, see *Hyp.* 13, in which Boswell asserts that his visits to asylums have shown "disappointed Love [to be] one of the most frequent causes of madness."

<sup>10</sup> The lady was Isabella de Zuylen, Boswell's Zélide. See Scott, *The Portrait of Zélide*, and Boswell's letter to her (*Letters of B.*, 1. 50):

You have confess to me that you are subject to hypochondria. I well beleive it. You have a delicate constitution and a strong imagination. In order to be free from a dis temper which renders you miserable, you must not act like one in despair. You must be carefull of your health, by living regularly and carefull of your mind, by employing it moderately. If you act thus you may expect to be happy, if you resign yourself to fancy, you will have now and then a little feverish joy but no permanent satisfaction.

<sup>11</sup> *Macbeth*, 3. 2. 36; the following quotation, *Hamlet*, 3. 1. 74.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 26, where Boswell falsely ascribes to Horace these phrases from Juvenal's tenth satire.

All the modes of cure—exercise—medicine—amusement—study—must be tried. Sometimes one will be successful, sometimes another. I have in a former paper earnestly recommended piety in a particular manner to those who are afflicted with *Hypochondria*.<sup>13</sup> And I would now enforce my counsel by the consideration that I have a belief that the malady is sometimes owing to the influence of evil spirits.<sup>14</sup> I shall conclude this paper

<sup>13</sup> *Hyp.* 39. For other remedies see *Hyp.* 1, 5, 6, 26, 40, 44, 50, and notes. Johnson's remedies were violent exertion, sociability, constant occupation, reading, and moderation in eating and drinking (*Life of J.*, 1. 74, 502, 517; 2. 50 n. 2, 485, 504; 3. 99, 200, 219, 419; 4. 437; *The Rambler*, 85; *Letters of B.*, 1. 226, 235).

Boswell's efforts to cure his gloom were theoretically supported by patient resignation, business and amusement, study, and meditation (*Letters of B.*, 1. 15, 41, 49 ff., 80, 97, 99–100, 109, 167; 2. 288, 301, 307, 309, 353, 371). In actual practice he craved change of place (see LONDON in Indexes to *Life of J.*, *Letters of B.*, and in the latter especially, 2. 429, 440) and excitement; he admitted that he indulged himself in drink and stupid follies to escape depression (*Letters of B.*, 1. 12, 56; 2. 359, 381). He recommended piety again in *Life of J.*, 1. 398, and practiced his religious duties sincerely, as his letters and the *Life* show; but he found it insufficient at the times of greatest stress (*Hyp.* 48 n. 6). In his later years, company assisted him a little, but not so much as formerly; the passing sense of importance in meeting the Prince of Wales, and his anxiety about his biography, lifted the veil occasionally, but not long (*Letters of B.*, 2. 376, 378, 390); it is clear that Boswell's most constant dependence was placed on people and their affection. All of his letters to Temple are cases in point; so are many of his letters to or concerning Johnson or Paoli (*Letters of B.*, 1. 17, 29, 83, 86, 186, 198, 221, 228, 254; 2. 271 n., 294, 295, 309, 372; see also *Life of J.*, 3. 200, 219; *Hebr.*, 146, 176). And in spite of his frequent infidelities, it is clear that Boswell's wife was one of his mainstays, as his references to her in her lifetime, and his childlike misery long after her death, conclusively show (see *Hyp.* 43 n. 3; *Hyp.* 42 n. 8).

<sup>14</sup> In these concluding remarks, Boswell seems to be thinking of a passage in his journals, which he had evidently enriched already with addenda. The comments in this essay on the madman's desire for pain are paralleled by observations of Johnson in the text of the *Life*, and the ascribing of madness to evil spirits, following so directly, but so abruptly, is paralleled by Boswell's footnote to Johnson's words (*Life of J.*, 3. 200):

[Text]

[Johnson] added, "Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. . . . When they grow very ill, pleasure is too weak for them, and they seek for pain."

[Note]

We read in the Gospels, that those unfortunate persons who were possessed with evil spirits (which, after all, I think is the most probable cause of madness, as was first suggested

with some verses upon the dire disease in different views, which I composed many years ago.

For me, a man of melancholy mind,  
To suffer much in this rude world design'd,  
Who oft in dreary sadness pass the day,  
Forc'd through the thickest gloom to grope my way.  
Whether some dæmon from Hell's region sent  
Permission has my being to torment,  
Or Justice orders that my soul should groan  
For former deep offences to atone;  
Or if black vapours of this earthly frame  
Can half extinguish my æthereal flame,  
I cannot tell!—I only kiss the rod  
With a firm faith in my eternal GOD!  
Whom I adore with a devotion pure,  
Sure he is good as of his power I'm sure.  
Sure that his creatures must in end be blest  
With pious hope I calm my troubled breast.

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to me by my respectable friend Sir John Pringle), had recourse to pain, tearing themselves, and jumping sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water. Mr. Seward has furnished me with a remarkable anecdote in confirmation of Dr. Johnson's observation. A tradesman, who had acquired a large fortune in London, retired from business, and went to live at Worcester. His mind, being without its usual occupation, and having nothing else to supply in its place, preyed upon itself, so that existence was a torment to him. At last he was seized with the stone; and a friend who found him in one of its severest fits, having expressed his concern, "No, no, Sir, (said he,) don't pity me: what I now feel is ease compared with that torture of mind from which it relieves me." *Boswell.*

For the intervention of spirits or other supernatural agencies in general, and Boswell's belief in them, see *Hyp.* 26, 48, 67, and notes.

No. LXIV. Jan. 1783.

## [ON CHANGE]

Πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς κειμένους νόμους ἴσχυρος φυλάττετε, καὶ μηδένα αὐτῶν μεταβάλητε. Τὰ γὰρ ἐν ταύτῳ μένοντα, κανὸν χείρων ἢ συμφορώτερα τῶν ἀεὶ καινοτομουμένων, κανὸν βελτίω εἰναι δοκῆ, ἐστίν.

—DION CASSIUS.<sup>1</sup>

“First then, firmly retain the established laws, and change them in nothing. For what remain always the same, though they may have some defects, are more useful than innovations which have an appearance of being better.”

“*Nolumus leges Angliae mutare*—We will not change the laws of England,” was pronounced with one voice by the earls and barons of the realm, when legitimation by subsequent marriage was attempted to be introduced, in the reign of Henry III. Their conduct on this occasion is applauded by *Blackstone*, who speaks of “the firm temper which the nobility shewed at the famous parliament of Merton.”<sup>2</sup>

Whether they were right or wrong in their opposition, does not depend upon the nature of the question proposed. For, it is probable, not one of them considered it. They were actuated by a general resolution against altering the laws of their country in any degree. And that such a resolution was not merely the rude positiveness of a barbarous age, appears from the passage in *Dion Cassius*, which I have prefixed as a motto to this paper, to shew that, in the politeness and refinement which prevailed under the Roman Emperors, the same thought was equally cherished.

In truth, there is in human nature a regard for permanency, and a dislike of innovation, of which it requires a good deal of

<sup>1</sup> *History of Rome* (Loeb edition), 53. 10. The magazine text gave γειμένους for κειμένους; ταύτῳ for ταύτῳ; κανὸν for κανὸν, in two instances; ἀεὶ for ἀεὶ; and δοκῆ for δοκῆ; the accent was omitted from νόμους, and the iota subscript from ἢ. Boswell left no corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 2. 523; Boswell states that such legitimation existed under Roman law, and “still obtains in the law of Scotland.” Johnson opined that the arrangement was “a bad thing,” and Boswell argues the point at some length, to prove him right.

Blackstone’s remark is found in the introduction to his *Commentaries of the Laws of England* (ed. Lewis, 1902, p. 20).

reasoning and exertion to get the better. I myself feel what I have now expressed, by having often experienced it. I am averse to change any old custom whatever, even the most minute, having a certain pleasure in what has been long practised, and imagining that no new contrivance will do as well.<sup>3</sup>

Novelty and variety are doubtless agreeable; and it is not quite easy to reconcile the love which we in general have of them with that principle of attachment which I have also asserted.

It appears to me, that setting apart those individuals in whom there is a considerable mixture of indolence and superstition, the proper distinction which will be found to obtain in the sentiments of mankind, is, that in slighter matters change is natural and pleasing, but in matters of importance is dangerous and alarming.

We may here observe an analogy with the government of the universe, in which all the great parts are constant, and the small variable. Were the course of the planets to alter, were the sea to be absorbed, or its tides to move in a different manner, the effect would be frightful. But we are amused with the varieties of weather, of vegetation, and other particulars.

Changes in dress are harmless and diverting. The primary purposes of it are decency, warmth, and ease, which however are not always well studied. But ornament and grace are its most conspicuous and animating objects, and these depend so much upon fancy, that they cannot be uniform or permanent.<sup>4</sup>

Matters of taste of every kind are in a similar situation; in particular that taste which occupies so great a number both of artists or designers, and of labourers—I mean gardening or beautifying grounds. It is happy that there is such a diversity of taste in this, because it affords constant employment to the industrious. I know a gentleman in my neighbourhood who had all the roads through his place dug pretty deep, and guarded on each side by sunk fences. This cost much money and kept many men in work. It seemed to be an excellent contrivance, that the view of the green fields might not appear to be broken, and that men and horses, and carts might pass without being perceived, and he and his friends joined heartily in approving of it. His heir succeeded,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 19. and notes; *Hyp.* 42, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 56 n. 17.

who would not ride in a ditch, and have his land cut into quarters, like a piece of fortification. He therefore had all levelled, which again circulated money, and gave bread to labourers, and he and his friends joined as heartily in approving of what was now done.

Sometimes the taste is all for extensive and open pleasure-ground; sometimes for snug, and close, and curious compartments.—As a contrast to all waving lines of beauty and delightful irregularity, take the following quotation from the Scots Gardener, by John Reid:—

“Make all the buildings and plantings lie so about the house, as that the house may be the center; all the walks, trees, and hedge running towards it. Therefore, whatever you have on the one hand, make as much, of the same form and in the same place, on the other.”<sup>5</sup>

—And then having exhibited a draught of his design, he proceeds:—

“In this small scale, the house is situated in the center, at B. round the house are ballisters: the common avenue is N, and ends in a triangle: C is the outer court; and in the two triangular courts, marked O, are placed the office houses, with their back part to the court, C opening without the line of the house. The two plots, P, may be ponds; the two marked G, cherry-gardens; a proper place also for raising gooseberries, currants, and strawberries. On the south side of the house, there is the pleasure or flower-garden, called the parterre; on each side whereof lie the kitchen-gardens, marked K; from thence there runs another walk ending in a semi-circle, S, which leads out to the lawn or deer park. The vistas or walks of prospect, that run from the four angles of the house, are very pleasant and convenient, and afford a good shelter and protection from rain: for which cause there are two thickets on the north side, marked T; on the south side there are two such, marked A, for nurseries, and at east and west are two orchards. The whole is environed with two rows of forest trees without the wall: the park wall should be parallel to these,

<sup>5</sup> Planting is mentioned as an excusable luxury in *Hyp.* 8, and the management of growing things is offered in *Hyp.* 36 as an “endless occupation” for the country gentleman. It is highly possible that Boswell had preserved this article on formal gardens in obedience to Johnson’s advice that he should “plant assiduously” at Auchinleck as his father had done before him (*Hebr.* 433). For Boswell’s more natural expressions of distaste for country improvements, see *Hyp.* 37, 38. This late reference in the present essay is important as revealing how sincerely Boswell kept up the effort to be interested in the affairs of his estate.

that is, every where equi distant from the house as its center; at least the whole an octagon, or near to a regular polygon, consisting of equal sides and angles. The walks, with their fences, being run forward from all the four sides and four angles of the house, till they touch at the middle of each side of the park wall, and serve in the park for divisors; which divisors may be hawthorn hedges, and these in the gardens holly; but in the court-entry and office courts, I think walls requisite.

Innovations in the laws or constitution of a country are ever to be dreaded. For as the effect of all public regulations is chiefly owing to the influence of opinion and habit, and it is long before new ones can have that influence, we are not sure how they may agree with the tempers and inclinations of the people. Wise men therefore will be willing to submit to some inconveniences, rather than attempt a reformation, which, although the word by which it is expressed has acquired in our language a signification of improvement, is in reality not always for the better. I do not mean to put a negative on every endeavour to improve gradually and insensibly. But sudden and violent changes in polity, should certainly be avoided.

Innovations in religion are still more to be dreaded. For if there be a reverence for ancient establishments in temporal matters, there is a higher reverence in spiritual. So that unless there is a very strong belief of divine authority, or a clear rational conviction of important necessity in favour of a change, it is more adviseable not to make it, though we may be sensible it would be better it were so. The loss of reverence is the most fatal thing that can happen in any society, both to general peace and particular comfort. And I own I always think with a pleasing regard of the mild reformer Melanchthon, who advised his aged mother to keep to the old religion.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On the loss of reverence, cf. *Hyp.* 19. The present passage explains why, in spite of his sympathy for the mystics of his day, Boswell did not leave the established church (cf. *Hyp.* 54, 55, and notes). As a matter of fact, he had leanings toward the even more strongly traditional discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, the "old religion," as he calls it not only here, but in *Life of J.*, 2. 121, and *Letters of B.*, 1. 58, where the anecdote of Melancthon is repeated. In his youth Boswell wished to become a communicant of the Roman church (see *Hyp.* 41 n. 1), and his later references to it are couched in a tone suggesting that he never lost the desire entirely. There are frequent conversations beginning, "We talked of the Roman Catholick religion" (*Life of J.*, 2. 172-73;

Nothing is more disagreeable than for a man to find himself unstable and changeful. An Hypochondriack is very liable to this uneasy imperfection, in so much that sometimes there remains only a mere consciousness of identity. His inclinations, his tastes, his friendships, even his principles, he with regret feels, or imagines he feels, are all shifted, he knows not how. This is owing to a want of firmness of mind. It is the characteristick of the Supreme Being, in the sacred writings, that he is “the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.” And that in him is “no varying, neither the least shadow of turning.”<sup>7</sup> In proportion therefore as the intellectual faculties are exalted, will the character be fixed.

Let it not be imagined that a fixed character is dull. There may be all varieties of perception and reflection, while the character itself which is conscious of them is stable. And it has been justly observed, that unstable characters, however brilliant in genius and talents, have never been respected. Of these, the most remarkable that I now recollect are Tigellius, as described by Horace, the Duke of Buckingham by Dryden, and the Duke of Wharton by Pope.<sup>8</sup>

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3. 20); Boswell records with care Johnson’s preference for Catholicism over Presbyterianism (*ibid.*, 2. 31, 119), and his declaration that he would be a Catholic if he could, on account of the comforts to be found in the church (*ibid.*, 4. 333–34); for his own part, he expresses pleasure in the liberal legislation for the benefit of Catholics (*ibid.*, 3. 485). On some occasions there is a strong suggestion that Boswell is drawing Johnson out to discuss points in belief or usage which he himself has been mulling over. In Scotland he actually upheld transubstantiation against Johnson’s argument for commemoration in communion (*Hebr.*, 80); in *Life of J.*, 2. 121, Boswell, after putting Johnson through a long examination on “all the common objections against the Roman Catholick Church,” in order to “hear so great a man upon them,” subjoins this paragraph:

I must however mention, that he had a respect for “*the old religion*,” as the mild Melancthon called [it] even while he was exerting himself for its reformation in some particulars. Sir William Scott informs me, that he heard Johnson say, “A man who is converted from Protestantism to Popery may be sincere: he parts with nothing; he is only superadding to what he already had. But a convert from Popery to Protestantism gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as any thing that he retains; there is so much *laceration of mind* in such a conversion, that it can hardly be sincere and lasting.” The truth of this reflection may be confirmed by many and eminent instances, some of which will occur to most of my readers.

<sup>7</sup> *Heb.*, 13. 8, and *James*, 1. 17.

<sup>8</sup> For the disrespect occasioned by unstable character, cf. *Hyp.* 23. The references are to Horace, *Sat.*, 1. 3. 3–19; Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1. 544; Pope, *Mor. Ess.*, 1. 179 ff. Dryden’s characterization of Buckingham (to

That some men are born with more steadiness of mind than others cannot be denied. Yet, I believe, it is much in our power to cure inconstancy by resolutely watching its beginnings, and resisting them, till a habit of stability is formed. Let this be an object of ambition, both in the view of present advantage,<sup>9</sup> and in

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which Johnson “gave great applause”—*Life of J.*, 2. 97) is quoted twice in *The Spectator*, in 162 and 222; in 162 Dryden is linked, as in the present essay, with Horace.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 39 n. 3. *Advantage* was originally printed *advatage*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

Boswell is probably thinking of the contrast which existed in his own family. His father, Lord Auchinleck, was one of those fortunates born with an equable disposition (*Hebr.*, 427–28):

.... he had originally a very strong mind, and cheerful temper. He assured me, he never had felt one moment of what is called low spirits, or uneasiness, without a real cause.

Of himself Boswell is obliged to remark, in the same work (p. 181),

I was hurt to find .... that I was so far from being that robust wise man who is sufficient for his own happiness.

His whole effort to discipline himself into a steady “propriety of conduct” is summed up in the concluding paragraphs of this essay; his letters, the *Life of Johnson*, and other numbers of *The Hypochondriack*, all show how much the subject was on his mind—cf. *Hyp.* 6, 23, 26, 37, 39, 44, 63, and notes. The exceptional instances, in which he allows his own rebellious feelings to show, are the essays on love, diversion, and country life (*Hyp.* 13, 25, 37, 38). For his occasional successes, in which he had “neither elevation nor gaiety,” but rather “a good insensibility,” see *Letters of B.*, 2. 301, and *Boswelliana*, 283:

I am for the most part either in too high spirits or too low. I am a grand wrestler with life. It is either above me, or I am above it; yet there are calm intervals in which I have no struggle with life, and I go quietly on.

It was the stability of character in his wife, in Paoli, in Johnson, which appealed to Boswell; cf. *Hyp.* 63 n. 13, and the general remarks which he inserts in the *Life of J.*, 3. 200:

To be with those of whom a person, whose mind is wavering and dejected, stands in awe, represses and composes an uneasy tumult of spirits, and consoles him with the contemplation of something steady, and at least comparatively great.

See also *ibid.*, 3. 219:

It was most comfortable to me to experience, in Dr. Johnson’s company, a relief from [wretched changefulness]. His steady vigorous mind held firm before me those objects which my own feeble and tremulous imagination frequently presented, in such a wavering state, that my reason could not judge well of them.

It was probably this comfortable dependence which Boswell mourned, when in 1778 he mentioned his regret at losing “the aweful reverence” which he had formerly felt before Johnson (cf. *Hyp.* 55 n. 9). When he was not depending upon stimulating personalities as incitements to virtue, Boswell placed his faith in

the prospect of being fitted for a better state of being, in which the vicissitudes of our mortal existence shall be no more.<sup>10</sup>

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vows of reform, or events which he expected to create a new life for him. See *Hyp.* 23 n. 3; *Hyp.* 30; *Hyp.* 44 n. 4; *Letters of B.*, 1. 95, 142, 161, 164, 229, 236, 251; 2. 405; and *Hebr.*, 383:

While contemplating the venerable ruins [at Iona] I reflected with much satisfaction, that the solemn scenes of piety never lose their sanctity and influence, though the cares and follies of life may prevent us from visiting them, or may even make us fancy that their effects are only "as yesterday, when it is past," and never again to be perceived. I hoped, that, ever after having been in this holy place, I should maintain an exemplary conduct. One has a strange propensity to fix upon some point of time from whence a better course of life may begin.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 39 n. 10.

No. LXV. Feb. 1783.

## [ON TIME]

'Αναγέγραπται δ' ὁ χρόνος ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς βίβλοις.—JOSEPHUS.<sup>1</sup>

"Time is recorded in the Sacred Writings."

TIME is the most difficult of all subjects on which our thinking faculty can be employed. We have no distinct notion what it is, at least, no notion which we can distinctly define. Hence it is, that some have endeavoured to maintain that it has no existence. Their reasoning, like those of *Berkeley* against the existence of matter, will not convince those who cannot answer them.<sup>2</sup> The ingenious *Soame Jenyns*, who sports in metaphysics with a singular agility of mind, has in one of his late *Disquisitions* added himself to the number of those sophists, and he exhibits a proof that a lively fancy and elegant language can make even puzzling, abstract speculation entertaining.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The magazine text for this passage gave δε for δ', ἱερᾶς for ἱεροῖς, and omitted accents and breathing marks from ἀναγέγραπται, χρόνος, ἐν, τοῖς, and βίβλοις. Boswell left no corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 39 n. 5. The phrasing here is something of a slur upon Johnson's flat response (*Life of J.*, 1. 545):

After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, "I refute it thus." This was a stout exemplification of the *first truths* of Pere [sic] Bouffier, or the *original principles* of Reid and of Beattie; without admitting which, we can no more argue in metaphysics, than we can argue in mathematicks without axioms. To me it is not conceivable how Berkeley can be answered by pure reasoning.

See also Johnson's joke on the forgotten friend (*ibid.*, 4. 32); *Boswelliana*, 238, and Boswell's allusion to the theory as a "reverie" (n. 8 below). It is to be remembered that Johnson spoke of the Bishop, however, as "a profound scholar, as well as a man of fine imagination" (*Life of J.*, 2. 152).

<sup>3</sup> *Disquisitions on Several Subjects*, of which the consideration of time is the fourth, was written in the author's seventy-eighth year (1782). Robert Walsh, editor of *Works of the British Poets*, says of it, "He advances amidst much valuable matter, a number of fanciful theories to which he seems to have been prompted by a love of novelty or a desire to show with what ingenuity opinions that contradict the general sense of mankind may be defended." The charm of the lively Jenyns is manifest in the lucubrations to which Boswell alludes:

Certain it is, that time, abstracted from the thoughts, actions, and motions which pass in it, is actually nothing: it is only the mode in which some created Beings are ordained to

But although we have no distinct notion of Time, we are sure of its being something real in itself, independent of our own perceptions, or of those of other beings. To think of it as infinite is astonishing and painful; and yet it is impossible for us not to believe that it is infinite.—That is a truth which the wildest atheist, the absurdest sceptick, cannot for a moment oppose. Time, without beginning and without end, takes within its immensity all nations, tongues, and languages; the saint, the savage, and the sage; the believer and the infidel of every kind, and impresses upon them perpetual existence with full conviction.

Nor is there any thing in the circle of human knowledge which is so frequently mentioned as Time. It is in every body's mouth in the course of common conversation. It is in one way or other introduced into every book that is written.

Like most other objects of contemplation, Time has been personified, but with more variety than many others. There is in general a greater uniformity in emblematical science than one would suppose. Fame is always a woman sounding a trumpet. Death a skeleton with a scythe and a dart. But Time is sometimes a river, along whose stream we are carried; sometimes a female, in whose womb events are hid; sometimes a man with wings, a sandglass, and a scythe. Time is imaged both as a creator and as a destroyer. Ambrose Philips, in a translation from Pindar, calls it “Time the father that produces all,”<sup>4</sup> and a thousand instances

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exist, but in itself has really no existence at all. . . . From observing the diurnal revolutions of the sun, and the various transactions which pass during those revolutions, we acquire conceptions of days: by dividing these days we form hours, minutes, and seconds; and by multiplying them, months, years, and ages; then by measuring these imaginary periods against each other, and bestowing on each distinct denominations, we give them the appearance of something real: yesterday, which is past, and tomorrow, which is not yet come, assume the same reality as the present day; and thus we imagine time to resemble a great book, one of whose pages is every day wrote on, and the rest remain blank, . . . whilst in fact this is all but the delusion of our imaginations, and time is nothing more than the manner in which past, present, and future events succeed each other: yet is this delusion so correspondent with our present state, and so woven up with all human language, that without much reflection it cannot be perceived, nor when perceived can it be remedied: nor can I, while endeavouring to prove time to be nothing, avoid treating it as something in almost every line.

For a note on this author see *Hyp. 22.*

<sup>4</sup> The second *Olympionique*, ep. 1. In his *Life of Philips*, Johnson says of “Namby Pamby’s” Pindarics,

In his translations from Pindar he found the art of reaching all the obscurity of the Theban bard, however he may fall below his sublimity; he will be allowed, if he has less fire, to have more smoke.

may be found where it is represented as ruining all. One of the finest and solemn is an old love-song:

Devouring Time with stealing pace,  
Makes lofty elms and cedars bow,  
And marble towers and walls of brass  
In his proud march he levels low.

It is plain then, that we are not only persuaded of the existence of Time, but of its existence and powerful activity. Such indeed is its activity, that there is nothing material upon the face of the globe, but what its progressive operation will gradually make as if it had never been. If there be a melancholy and discouraging reflection from this upon one hand to check our fondness and ambition, there is on the other hand a consolatory reflection to the unhappy, who, by looking forward with a keen eye, may behold the most prosperous and most insolent amongst mankind brought as low as themselves. The proverb says, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." If then the poor, unfortunate, and dispirited, can by foresight have a clear view of the lions of their time, grown old or dead, they will not be tormented with envy. Luckily for the world such foresight is very rare; for it would prevent the greatest part of that scheming and bustling by which life in general is animated and improved. Men would pass their days in torpid listlessness;<sup>5</sup> and youth would be as cold and indifferent as age.

The different views which we have of time, according to the different states of our mind, must have been observed by every one at all attentive to what he has experienced. Sometimes it seems to move with a pleasant velocity, during which we almost regret that it flies so swift, and it is remarkable, that all the allegorical representations of Time and the hours are winged. But too often we find it not only dully slow, but even painfully

<sup>5</sup> Boswell likes "torpid" to express the dull gloom of the stagnant mind or state. Cf. *Hyp. 8*, *vigorous faculties would lie torpid*; *Hyp. 57*, *torpid inutility*; *Hyp. 68*, *torpor of the faculties*; *Hyp. 69*, *torpid as the most profane raver would represent himself*; and *Letters of B.*, 1. 19; 2. 380—" [my faculties] have been torpid for some time, except in conversation."

The apothegm which Boswell quotes as a proverb comes from *Eccl.*, 9. 4—"For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion."

burthensome to us, and hence the expression to *pass Time* and to *kill Time*, indicating its uneasy pressure in a smaller or greater degree.

Chronology, or the art of ascertaining the different divisions of time, during which certain events have happened, is a very curious study; but should think<sup>6</sup> it would tend to make those who apply to it have a slight notion of themselves; for what is the longest life of man compared with centuries and still larger portions of Time with which chronologists are versant. The calculators of lives, who reduce the probability of living within a narrow compass, should be still more indifferent about themselves. Yet although in moments of pure speculation the studious in both these lines may be affected in the manner which it is natural to suppose, we find such a happy partiality for self, and such a fond excess of hope, that they are as much in earnest in all the concerns of this world as others are.

To apply chronology to the lives of individuals, would be an entertaining, but I believe, in by far the greatest number of instances, a very humiliating experiment. Were an accurate table to be made out with various columns, in which upon a fair computation the portions of Time appropriated to eating, drinking, sleeping, conversation, study, business, amusements, in short, all the several modes of existence were to be marked, we should be surprised to see the short duration, the small quantity of any thing which has either our love or our approbation. It would be found that some of the most distinguished speakers in Parliament have not spoken two months; that some of the most brilliant, fine ladies of the court, have not been admired above a quarter of a year; nay, that some of the oldest and most intimate friends have not seen one another for a twelve-month in the whole.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Either Boswell considers this construction correct, or it is an error which he makes habitually; see *Hyp.* 69 n. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Such casting up accounts of time was a favorite device of Boswell; cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 298, where Boswell in speaking of fame weighs the time devoted to thoughts of Shakespeare, Voltaire, and so on, in comparison with the time spent on other attractions: "Let this be extracted and compressed; into what a narrow space it will go!" It is possible that Boswell took the trick from *The Spectator*, 93:

If we divide the life of most men into twenty parts, we shall find that . . . nineteen are mere gaps and chasms, which are neither [sic] filled with pleasure nor business. . . .

The truth is, that human life must not be highly estimated and very nicely examined if one is desirous of tranquillity.<sup>8</sup> An analysis such as I have suggested would overwhelm with vexation a mind all alive to noble ambition as in the youthful ardency when at college. But I am not of opinion that continued exertion is required as a duty of every one. They whom the love of fame, of riches, or of titles, urges on with equal rapidity through the more advanced stages of life, as through the earlier stages, gratify their active inclination. They who are content with moderate advantages gratify their love of ease. Both are good members of society, and though the former may be more admired, the latter may be as much esteemed. There is only one mode of employing our time in which our best endeavours should never abate, I mean the exercise of religion. I recollect, with calm satisfaction, having heard long ago a sermon by a worthy clergyman

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—or from the second chapter of his beloved *Essai de Philosophie Morale* by Maupertuis (see *Hyp.* 30):

Si Dieu accomplissoit nos désirs, qu'il supprimât pour nous tout le temps que nous voudrions supprimé; le vieillard seroit surpris de voir le peu qu'il auroit vécu; peut-être toute la durée de la plus longue vie seroit réduite à quelques heures.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 23, 24, 37 n. 3, 53 n. 2; and *Letters of B.*, 2. 284:

What a strange complicated scene is this life. It allways strikes me that we cannot seriously, closely, and clearly examine almost any part of it. We are at pains to bring up children, just to give them an opportunity of struggling through cares and fatigues.

See also *Life of J.*, 2. 414, and 3. 187 (Boswell's own reflections):

Though, it is proper to value small parts, as

“Sands make the mountain, moments make the year;”

yet we must contemplate, collectively, to have a just estimation of objects. One moment's being uneasy or not, seems of no consequence; yet this may be thought of the next, and the next, and so on, till there is a large portion of misery. In the same way one must think of happiness, of learning, of friendship. . . . We must not divide objects of our attention into minute parts, and think separately of each part. It is by contemplating a large mass of human existence, that a man, while he sets a just value on his own life, does not think of his death as annihilating all that is great and pleasing in the world, as if actually contained in his mind, according to Berkeley's reverie. If his imagination be not sickly and feeble, it “wings its distant way” far beyond himself, and views the world in unceasing activity of every sort. . . . We are apt to transfer to all around us our own gloom, without considering that at any given point of time there is, perhaps, as much youth and gaiety in the world as at another. Before I came into this life, in which I have had so many pleasant scenes, have not thousands and ten thousands of deaths and funerals happened, and have not families been in grief for their nearest relations? But have those dismal circumstances at all affected me? Why then should the gloomy scenes which I experience, or which I know, affect others? Let us guard against imagining that there is an end of felicity upon earth, when we ourselves grow old, or are unhappy.

now in his 88th year, from these words: "Be not weary in well doing, for, in due season, ye shall reap if ye faint not."<sup>9</sup>

To think eagerly of the nature of Time itself, simply considered, is enough to turn one's brain:<sup>10</sup> but there is amusement in considering its effects and relations. I shall, therefore, without any regular order, add a few more thoughts upon the subject.

The effect of Time in diminishing grief, though inexplicable, is universally known, and is a benignant circumstance in our constitution. It is thus beautifully expressed in the tragedy of Douglas:

"Time that wears out the trace of deepest sorrow,  
"As the sea smoothes the prints made in the sand."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Boswell quotes from memory *Galat.*, 6. 9—"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

The aged clergyman was, I think, the Reverend John Dun, pastor of the church at Auchinleck (*Letters of B.*, 2. 374, 387). In 1783, the year in which this essay was written, Boswell pleased Johnson with an account of having removed an old gentleman of eighty-eight to a lodging on the family's own grounds (*Life of J.*, 4. 188); in 1792 Boswell expressed sincere regret at hearing of the death of Mr. Dun, who had been "long infirm" (*Letters of B.*, 2. 491, 445). It is pleasant to believe that the sermon which Boswell remembers in this *Hypochondriack* was the one he announced his intention to hear, in a letter of 1775 (*ibid.*, 1. 240). The old clergyman published his sermons in 1790, but according to a letter of Boswell's (*ibid.*, 2. 387) was probably "a sad loser" by the transaction. For what I suspect to be another allusion to Mr. Dun, see *Hyp.* 21 n. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 10, 26, 39, 53, 67, for other instances of this excessive mental agitation. The general tone of this and the preceding paragraph is paralleled by the reflection in *Boswelliana*, 205:

A man who wishes just to be easy will always avoid those subjects which he has discovered are hard and puzzling. Nay, he will not even take the trouble to make the selection, but like a luxurious indolent eater, wherever he finds any piece in the least degree tough he will let it alone.—23rd Sept., 1780.

<sup>11</sup> Boswell quotes from memory one of Randolph's speeches in Act 1 in Home's tragedy—"Time that wears out the trace of deepest anguish." Boswell's very favorable judgment of this play (he quotes it again in *Hyp.* 10, 59) may have been in part the result of his friendship for the author (see *Letters of B.*, 1. 189, 229; *Boswelliana*, 252, 308). His opinion was shared by most of his contemporaries, however. The Princess Dowager of Wales gave the author £100 a year (*Letters of Walpole*, 3. 78); Thomas Sheridan gave him a medal (*Life of J.*, 2. 366); Lord Monboddo said that "Douglas was a better play than Shakespeare could have written" (*Memoirs of Hannah More*, 2. 22); David Hume supported this statement, and prophesied that the drama would be "esteemed the

What is still more striking, it diminishes the horrour and resentment which we feel at crimes; and upon this principle in human nature is founded the doctrine of the civil law, that there is a prescription of the punishment of crimes, shorter or longer, in proportion as the offence is atrocious. If a man with whom I live in habits of friendship were to commit a murder, I should break off all connection with him; but if he should acknowledge to me that he had committed a murder thirty or forty years ago, though I should be shocked at first, I believe I should not give him up on that account. This effect of Time upon our own minds may give us some reason humbly to hope that guilt of whatever kind may be absorbed in the lapse of ages.

Any portion of Time appears shorter to us the longer we live. We all recollect how in childhood a period of one or two years seemed of large extent, whereas when we have attained to middle age it bears no bulk in the imagination. The reason is, as I once heard observed by a man of strong sagacity, that the older we are, we have the longer measure to apply to any period of time. We measure it with our own life, and the more that is lengthened the shorter does the period which is measured appear.<sup>12</sup>

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best, and by French critics the only tragedy of our language" (Burton, *Life of Hume*, 2. 17); Thomas Gray wrote to Walpole that Home had "retrieved the true language of the stage, . . . . lost for these hundred years" (*Letters of Gray*, ed. Tovey, 1. 335 n. 2).

Garrick had refused to present the tragedy, and Goldsmith poked fun at it in *The Citizen of the World*, 21, but its most crushing critic was Dr. Johnson, who argued on the subject with Boswell in the Hebrides (*Hebr.*, 410): he repeated his former statement that there were not ten good lines scattered through the play, and when Boswell "endeavoured to defend that pathetick and beautiful tragedy" with a quotation from it, Johnson demolished it with a quotation from Juvenal, and the comment, "And, after this, comes Johnny Home, with his *earth gaping*, and his *destruction crying*:—Pooh!" Boswell adds a patient footnote to the passage in which the conversation is recorded:

I am sorry I was unlucky in my quotation. But notwithstanding the acuteness of Dr. Johnson's criticism, and the power of his ridicule, *The Tragedy of Douglas* still continues to be generally and deservedly admired.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *The Spectator*, 590; Boswell's letter to Temple, in which he describes himself as "continually looking back or looking forward" (*Letters of B.*, 2. 372); and *Rasselas*, chap. 30:

The truth is that no mind is much employed upon the present; recollection and anticipation fill up almost all our moments. . . . Of joy and grief the past is the object, and the future, of hope and fear.

It is a common saying, that Time past seems much shorter than Time to come. This may be true with those who are not habituated to recollection; but to those who do recollect, I am of opinion Time past appears longer than Time to come; for it is more marked with divisions which fix the view and point out its extent. If a man looks back at once to a former period of his life, the Time between seems very short, as when one looks from one hill to another the intermediate ground is not perceived. But if in the one case one walks over the intermediate ground, or, in the other, traces all the events of the time between, the length of each will be very obvious. Whereas, to look forward for the same space is like looking upon the ocean or upon an expanse of air, of either of which a large extent will not appear to the eye by any means in its due proportion.

No. LXVI. March 1783.

## [ON DIARIES]

*Perutile fuerit ante somnum notare quæcunque luce ea peracta sunt.*  
—FORTIUS.

“It will be of great use to mark down every night, before going to sleep, what you have done during the day.”

THE learned *Crenius* has made an excellent collection for the benefit of the studious, under the title of *Consilia & Studiorum Methodi*, by some of the most eminent modern literati, *Erasmus*, *Fortius Vossius*, and others.<sup>1</sup> From the treatise by *Fortius*, I have taken, as a motto to this paper, a precept, which,

<sup>1</sup> This is another of those guides to study which Boswell used as a stimulus to learning. For Boswell's dependence upon system in study, and Johnson's attitude toward it, see *Hyp.* 46 n. 7.

*Crenius* was the pseudonym of Thomas Theodorus Crusius (1648–1728), German historian and philologist; he also wrote under the name of *Dorotheus Sicurus*. He composed several histories, and many compilations of the type which Boswell mentions here, evidently gleaning chiefly from other German and Netherlandish scholars. This work, published at Rotterdam in 1692, is properly entitled *Consilia et Methodus aurea Studiorum optime instituendorum*.

Boswell's punctuation makes it appear that *Fortius Vossius* is the name of one man; there is, however, no such person. *Vossius* is Gerhard Johann Voss (1577–1649), classical scholar and theologian, born at Heidelberg; he was the friend of *Grotius* and the master of numerous scholars, among whom was the Cornelius Tollius mentioned by Boswell in *Hyp.* 50. He declined an invitation to teach at Cambridge, but accepted the degree of LL.D. from Oxford, and an appointment as prebend without residence at Canterbury Cathedral. His last years were devoted to the teaching of history at the Athenaeum of Amsterdam.

I can find no trace of any *Fortius*, and, not having at my command a copy of *Crenius*'s collection, I cannot verify the name. I believe it to be either an exaggerated Latinizing or a careless copying of the form *Vorstius*, assumed by Johann Vorst (1623–1676) after the manner of scholars in his day. Vorst was born at Wesselburg in Holstein, and after graduating from Wittemberg became master at various colleges, increasing his fame by editions of various Latin historians. I am inclined to identify him with “*Fortius*” the more because he was well known to *Crenius*, who used some of his pamphlets in another collection such as the one now under discussion—*Opuscula ad historiam . . . sacram spectantia*. *Crenius* accused *Vorstius* of plagiarizing because he did not always mention his sources, but it appears that *Crenius* quoted the man he thus accused without reference on several occasions. Some scholars even incline to the belief that the *Opuscula* was the compilation of *Vorstius*.

though meant only as a counsel for improving in literature, may be well applied to the most essential of all studies, the study how to *live* to the best advantage.

The ancient precept “γνῶθι σεαυτόν—Know thyself,”<sup>2</sup> which by some is ascribed to Pythagoras, and by others is so venerated as to be supposed one of the sacred responses of the oracle at Delphos, cannot be so perfectly obeyed without the assistance of a register of one’s life. For memory is so frail and variable, and so apt to be disturbed and confused by the perpetual succession of external objects and mental operations, that if our situation be not limited indeed, it is very necessary to have our thoughts and actions preserved in a mode not subject to change, if we would have a *fair* and distinct view of our character.<sup>3</sup>

This consideration joined with “the importance of a man to himself” has had some effect in all times. For we find that many people have written such registers, to which they have given the name of *Journals* or *Diaries*, from their being a record of each day in the course of life. “The importance of a man to himself,”

<sup>2</sup> The inscription on the Temple at Delphi, attributed to one of the seven wise men of Greece. The precept is credited to Thales by Diogenes Laërtius; Antisthenes claims it for Phemonoe, with the comment that Chilo had appropriated it as his own (Diog. Laërt., *Life of Thales*, 13). Juvenal later ascribed it directly to heaven (*Sat.*, II. 27)—

*E caelo descendit γνῶθι σεαυτόν.*

As in so many of the Greek quotations, the magazine text gave the phrase without proper accents, and was left uncorrected by Boswell.

See also *Hyp.* 7, “reverence thyself.”

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Hebr.*, 448, where Robertson alludes to Boswell’s note-taking habits as being on the same plane with the recollections of a good memory; Boswell adds—“With the leave, however, of this elegant historian, no man’s memory can preserve facts or sayings with such fidelity as may be done by writing them down when they are recent.” See also *ibid.*, 479. Johnson’s constant advice to all his younger friends was to keep a journal, written always “while the impression is fresh, for it will not be the same a week afterwards” (*Life of J.*, 2. 249). This he especially enjoined upon persons experiencing the novelties of travel, as his letters to Baretti, Boswell, Langton, and Saunders Welch show (*ibid.*, I. 390, 423, 550; 3. 247); see also his remarks in *Hebr.*, 142: “. . . how seldom descriptions correspond with realities; and the reason is, that people do not write them till some time after, and then their imagination has added circumstances.”

Johnson himself could not keep a journal regularly; see Birkbeck Hill’s collected references on the subject, *Life of J.*, I. 501.

simply considered, is not a subject of ridicule; for, in reality, a man is of more importance to himself than all other things or persons can be. The ridicule is, when self-importance is obtruded upon others to whom the private concerns of an individual are quite insignificant. A diary, therefore, which was much more common in the last age than in this, may be of valuable use to the person who writes it, and yet if brought forth to the publick eye may expose him to contempt, unless in the estimation of the few who think much and minutely, and therefore know well of what little parts the principal extent of human existence is composed.<sup>4</sup>

Lord Bacon says, in one of his essays—"It is a strange thing that in sea voyages, where there is nothing to be seen but sky and sea, men should make diaries; but in land-travel, where so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it; as if chance were fitter to be registered than observation. Let diaries, therefore, be brought in use."<sup>5</sup>

But it is to be considered, whether little being to be seen at sea

<sup>4</sup> In this passage Boswell is perhaps thinking of a conversation with Johnson in 1763 (*Life of J.*, 1. 501-2):

He recommended to me to keep a journal of my life, full and unreserved. He said it would be a very good exercise, and would yield me great satisfaction when the particulars were faded from my remembrance. I was uncommonly fortunate in having had a previous coincidence of opinion with him upon this subject, for I had kept such a journal for some time. . . . He counselled me to keep it private, and said I might surely have a friend who would burn it in case of my death. From this habit I have been enabled to give the world so many anecdotes, which would otherwise have been lost to posterity. I mentioned that I was afraid I put into my journal too many little incidents. JOHNSON. "There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible."

See also *ibid.*, 2. 410. The use of the journal was to enable a man to watch the history of his mind (*ibid.*, 3. 258):

I talked of publishing [Sibbald's account of his life]. MRS. THRALE. ". . . To discover such weakness, exposes a man when he is gone." JOHNSON. "Nay, it is an honest picture of human nature. How often are the primary motives of our greatest actions as small as Sibbald's. . . ." MRS. THRALE. "But may they not be forgotten?" JOHNSON. "No, Madam, a man loves to review his own mind. That is the use of a diary, or journal." LORD TRIMLESTOWN. "True, Sir. As the ladies love to see themselves in a glass; so a man likes to see himself in his journal." BOSWELL. "A very pretty allusion. . . . And as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal."

Cf. *ibid.*, 2. 249; 3. 295; *Hebr.*, 310.

<sup>5</sup> Boswell has copied carelessly from Bacon's eighteenth essay, *Of Travel*: following "land-travel," "where" should be "wherein," and the last sentence should be separated from what precedes only by a colon.

is not the very reason why a diary is so regularly kept on ship-board. For what is difficult to be done will generally be avoided, from the indolence, or rather aversion to stated labour, which is so prevalent; whereas what is easy and quickly dispatched will be habitually performed, almost without any consciousness of exertion. The changes of the weather, the movements of the ship, the prospects of land, and a few occasional incidents are all that can be expected in a nautical ephemeris; though sometimes the commander of a vessel is a man of more than ordinary curiosity and observation, and keeps a journal of greater variety. There is at the India-House a very large collection of the journals which the captains of all the company's ships are obliged to keep of their voyages. Amongst these there are a few of the kind which I have now mentioned, of which I have been obligingly allowed inspection. I remember one in particular which not only mentions every remarkable circumstance of every sort that occurred, but is enriched with drawings which convey clear and distinct ideas of the several objects, whether animal or vegetable.

But it is a work of very great labour and difficulty to keep a journal of life, occupied in various pursuits, mingled with concomitant speculations and reflections, in so much, that I do not think it possible to do it unless one has a peculiar talent for abridging. I have tried it in that way, when it has been my good fortune to live in a multiplicity of instructive and entertaining scenes, and I have thought my notes like portable soup, of which a little bit by being dissolved in water will make a good large dish; for their substance by being expanded in words would fill a volume. Sometimes it has occurred to me that a man should not live more than he can record, as a farmer should not have a larger crop than he can gather in.<sup>6</sup> And I have regretted that there is no invention for getting an immediate and exact transcript of the mind, like that instrument by which a copy of a letter is at once taken off.

Perhaps it may not be for the advantage of every one to keep a diary. Should a man of great force of mind, impetuous in undertaking, and ardent in activity, examine himself frequently

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Boswell's doubts as to his capacity for acquiring wisdom—*Life of J.*, 3. 460; *Hyp.* 4 n. 15.

with nice attention, it might weaken and relax his powers, as taking it often to pieces will hurt the machinery of a watch. The important events and larger circumstances may be daily committed to writing. But he must not stop to examine the springs, or point out the detail, though these are what a philosopher would be most desirous [to]<sup>7</sup> know.

It is, no doubt, a very interesting occupation to record one's own life, and supposing it to be skilfully done, so as not to consume too much time, I should think it a practice to be generally recommended. That the practice is ancient, I cannot doubt from what Horace says of Lucilius, in a passage which always pleased me exceedingly,

*"Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim,  
Credebat libris; neque, si male cesserat, usquam,  
Decurrens alio, neque si bene: quo fit ut omnis  
Votivâ pateat veluti descripta labellâ,  
Vita senis.*

Behold him frankly to his book impart,  
As to a friend, the secrets of his heart:  
To write was all his aim, too heedless bard,  
And well or ill, unworthy his regard.  
Hence the old man stands open to your view,  
Though with a careless hand the piece he drew."

FRANCIS.

I give Francis's translation because I have no other at hand, and do not at present find myself able to give a better. But I am not satisfied with it, because it plainly applies to Lucilius only as an author, in which sense, Francis understands the passage, as he has told us in the following note:—"We are yet to enquire what Horace designs by *neque si bene, neque si male cesserat*. The

<sup>7</sup> Inserted by the editor. For other odd omissions of this sort, left uncorrected by Boswell, see n. 10 following, and *Hyp.* 65 n. 6; 69 notes 5 and 15.

Contrast to the statements in this paragraph concerning detail, Boswell's usual distaste for minute examination (*Hyp.* 23, 24, 37, 65, and notes). Johnson's usual good sense kept him from sharing Boswell's worries about the amount a diary should contain, or the effect of keeping one; cf. *Life of J.*, 4. 203-4:

[JOHNSON]. "It is a very good custom to keep a journal for a man's own use; he may write upon a card a day all that is necessary to be written, after he has had experience of life. At first there is a great deal to be written, because there is a great deal of novelty; but when once a man has settled his opinions, there is seldom much to be set down."

commentators understand the words to mean the good or bad condition of his private affairs. But there is no kind of appearance, that Lucilius filled his writings with his personal concernments, or the state of his domestic affairs. An affectation so remarkable would rise at first view, in the numerous fragments that remain of his works. We perceive nothing like it, and may therefore receive another meaning from Dr. Bentley, “*Nusquam aliò, quam ad libros decurrentis seu benè si cesserat in scribendo, seu male*,” whatever was his poetical good or ill fortune, he still indulged his passion for writing. From hence we may perceive his good or bad days; his lucky or unlucky moments, which Horace means when he says, Lucilius gave us a picture of his life, his poetical life, in his writings.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Sat.*, 2. 1. 30 ff. Boswell's faulty punctuation here (as in his quotation from the review of Rutty's diary in following paragraphs) creates confusion as to how much of the quoted note belongs to one writer and how much to the other. The fact is that the whole comment, from *We are yet to enquire* down to *poetical life in his writings*, is quoted from Francis. He in turn quoted the Latin paraphrase of Horace's line from Bentley, adding a loose translation of Bentley's Latin comment; the passage thus adapted originally ran,

.... hoc est, *Nusquam alio præterquam ad libros decurrentis, seu bene ei cesserat in scribendo, seu male*. Scilicet quovis ille die scribere amabat, sive aptus tum ad studium, seu, ut sæpe usu venit, ineptior; seu Musis faventibus, sive aversis.

Properly, therefore, the usual marks for quotation within quotation should surround only the sentence *Nusquam . . . . scribendo, seu male*.

Philip Francis (1708?–1773), whose translations of Horace Boswell has quoted so frequently, was famous chiefly for this work, although he attempted other translation and a drama. He became attached to the Fox family, with the result that Churchill alluded to him in *The Author* as “atheist chaplain of an atheist lord.” Sir Philip Francis, supposed author of the Junius letters, was his son. Of the translations from Horace (1742–1746) Johnson said (*Life of J.*, 3. 405), “Francis has done it the best; I'll take his, five out of six, against them all.”

Richard Bentley (1662–1742), of whom Johnson said “No man knows as much Greek and Latin,” and “You will admire Bentley more when wrong, than Jason when right” (*Life of J.*, 2. 508; 4. 251; *Hebr.*, 198), was one of the greatest classical students, if not one of the greatest classical scholars, that England ever produced. He combined extraordinary control of classical material with a confidence and daring that made his textual criticism convincing and decisive. He took the degree of D.D. in 1696, a year after becoming keeper of the royal library; in 1700 he was appointed master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Both of these institutions were in need of reform, which Bentley dealt to them with laudable vigor, and at the expense of long quarrels. His fame

I cannot give up the opinion which I have ever held, even to Bentley, a critick whom I sincerely respect, especially when I am supported by the commentators. It is clear to me that by *libris* the poet meant *journals* or diaries, and that *vita* signifies life in its plain and usual sense, and not its metaphorical sense. I shall, therefore, inscribe upon a chest containing my journal.

*Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella  
Vita Senis.<sup>9</sup>*

The chief objection against keeping a diary fairly registered, which [records?] <sup>10</sup> the state of our minds, and all the little occurrences by which we are intimately affected, is the danger of its falling into the hands of other people, who may make use of it to our prejudice. An Hypochondriack is particularly prone to think of himself. Uneasiness directs his attention inwards. I have kept a diary for considerable portions of my life. And, in order to guard against detection of what I wished to be concealed, I once wrote parts of it in a character of my own invention, by way of a cypher, but having given over the practice for several years, I forgot my alphabet, so that all that is written in it must for ever remain as unintelligible to myself as to others. This was merely a loss. But a much worse circumstance happened. I left a large parcel of diary in Holland to be sent after me to Britain with other papers. It was fairly written out, and contained many things which I should be very sorry to have communicated except to my most intimate friends; the packages having been loosened, some of the other papers were chafed and spoiled with water, but the Diary was missing. I was sadly vexed, and felt as if a part of my vitals had been separated from me, and all the consolation I received from a very good friend, to whom I wrote in the most earnest

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rests chiefly on his *Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris* (1699) and his *Terence* (1726); the edition of Horace, gotten out in the midst of strife with the fellows of his college (1711), was done in haste and, in spite of its indubitable learning and imagination, is over-emended, and without feeling for the poetic qualities of the author.

<sup>9</sup> Boswell may or may not have used these lines for his own journals, now lost; it is certain that he employed them as the motto for the *Life of Johnson*.

<sup>10</sup> Inserted by the editor. For other omissions left uncorrected by Boswell see n. 7 above.

anxiety to make enquiry if it could be found any where, was, that he could discover no trace of it, though he had made diligent search in all the little houses, so trifling did it appear to him. I comfort myself with supposing that it has been totally destroyed in the carrying. For, indeed it is a strange disagreeable thought, that what may be properly enough called so much of one's mind should be in the possession of a stranger, or perhaps of an enemy. This should serve as a lesson not to write any thing in a Diary, the discovery of which may do one essential hurt, unless the person who writes it carries his diary continually about with him, and can take as good care of it as Cæsar did of his Commentaries.

If a Diary be honestly and judiciously kept, it will not only be immediately useful to the person who keeps it, but will afford the most authentick materials for writing his life, which, if he is at all eminent, will always be an acceptable addition to literature; and in some instances it will give the most genuine view of many of the events and characters of the time.<sup>11</sup> Diaries have been kept by persons of all ranks and denominations, and I fancy there is not one that will not in some degree interest an inquirer into human nature. I was lately reading the Diary of that illustrious

<sup>11</sup> Boswell knew that the *Life of Johnson*, which was of course a development of his own journals, would be just such a "genuine view" of eighteenth-century life; cf. his letter to Dempster (*Letters of B.*, 2. 435), and to Temple (*ibid.*, 2. 388):

.... two quarto volumes for one life would have appeared exorbitant, though in truth it is a view of much of the literature and many of the literary men of Great Britain for more than half a century.

Sir William Forbes said much the same thing to him of the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (*Hebr.*, 472).

For Boswell's methods of collecting his notes and expanding them, his ideal of "exact transcript of conversations," and the numerous affronts he endured in taking down his data with precision, see *Life of J.*, Index under BOSWELL, *Journal*. In regard to information—"authentick information"—concerning Johnson, he was so utterly conscienceless as to be slightly annoyed that Mrs. Boswell did not secretly copy parts of Dr. Johnson's journal for the good of mankind, while he was in the Hebrides (*Hebr.*, 59):

He also left [in an open drawer, of which he gave my wife the charge] one volume of a pretty full and curious Diary of his Life, of which I have a few fragments; but the book has been destroyed. I wish female curiosity had been strong enough to have had it all transcribed; which might easily have been done; and I should think the theft, being *pro bono publico*, might have been forgiven. But I may be wrong.

and much injured prelate Archbishop *Laud*, which the violent and oppressive rage of rebellion dragged forth as part of the evidence against him. It is estimable not only for the fragments which it contains of important history, but for the tender, humane, and pious sentiments which it undeniably proves were the constant current of his mind. Let the following excerpts suffice:

“January 25. It was Sunday. I was alone and languishing with I know not what sadness.”—Here I venture to claim connection with him; for this surely was *Hypochondria*.

“October 2. Saturday. In the evening at Mr. Windebank’s, my ancient servant, Adam Torless, fell into a swoon, and we had much ado to recover him, but I thank God we did.

“January 30. Sunday night, my dream of my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. One of the most comfortable passages that ever I had in my life.

“July 3. Sunday in my sleep his Majesty King James appeared to me. I saw him only passing by swiftly, pleasant, and serene countenance. In passing he saw me, beckoned to me, smiled, and was immediately withdrawn from my sight.”

The superstition which is to be found in his Diary, such as his taking notice of two Robin red-breasts flying into his study, and his picture having fallen down, instead of lessening his character in my opinion throws a peculiar kind of sanctity around it, which it would be presumptuous to question.<sup>12</sup>

There is a Diary of a very different character, called “A spiritual Diary and Soliloquies, by John Rutty, M.D.” published in two volumes, quarto. In the Critical Review for March, 1777, there is an account of this singular curious work, introduced with

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 48 on dreams, and 26, 55, in which Boswell declares himself no enemy to superstition.

William Laud, as Archbishop of Canterbury, had supported with narrow tactlessness the forms and tenets of the established church against dissenters and their sympathizers, and given assistance to the promulgation of the theory of divine right of kings; it went hard with him therefore as the power of the Puritans increased, both Parliament and court blaming him as the chief source of all disagreements. Six months after he had been imprisoned in the Tower, Parliament ordered Prynne to search Laud’s papers, and a mutilated edition of his diary was forthwith published (1643). A great part of the charge against him was the accusation of sympathy with “popery”; he was executed in January 1645.

some observations so good, that in justice both to the writer of them and my readers, I cannot but transcribe them.<sup>18</sup>

There are few writers, who have gained any reputation by recording their own actions. The attempt is attended with peculiar difficulty and danger. If an author speaks of his virtues or his exploits, he runs the hazard of being censured for his vanity and ostentation. If he descends to the trivial circumstances of private life, he makes himself ridiculous by supposing that the world will concern itself with his domestick occurrences. We may reduce the egotists to four classes. In the first we have Julius Cæsar: he relates his own transactions; but he relates them with peculiar grace and dignity; and his narrative is supported by the greatness of his character and achievements. In the second class we have Marcus Antoninus: this writer has given us a series of reflections on his own life; but his sentiments are so noble, his morality so sublime, that his meditations are universally admired. In the third class, we have some others of tolerable credit, who have given importance to their own private history by an intermixture of literary anecdotes, and the occurrences of their own times: the celebrated Huetius has published an entertaining volume upon this plan, "*De Rebus ad eum pertinentibus!*" In the fourth class, we have the journalists, temporal and spiritual, Elias Ashmole, William Lilly, George Whitfield, John Westley, and a thousand other old women and fanatics, writers of memoirs and meditations.

<sup>18</sup> For Boswell's delight in reviews, cf. *Boswelliana*, 275:

The extracts of a book given in the review often please us much more than the book itself does. The extracts are embellished and illustrated with criticism. It is like collops well-seasoned and served up with a good sauce, which are better eating than the sirloin or rump from whence they are cut.

See also *Hyp.* 14, 41, 62.

Boswell's careless punctuation gives no indication of the points at which the quotation from the review begins and ends. The paragraph beginning *There are few writers* and ending *writers of memoirs and meditations* is taken from the review; so are the items from the diary. The biographical note on Dr. Rutty, and the comment beginning *The fictitious journals in the Spectator* are Boswell's own remarks. It is enlightening to compare this passage with the *Life of J.*, 3. 194–95, in which Boswell reproduces the same selections from the review because they had amused Johnson so much. In the *Life* Boswell carefully separates the quoted portions from his own words by proper introduction and punctuation, corrects the misspelling of *Whitefield* and *Wesley*, italicizes the words *Huetius*, *first, second, third, fourth*, and omits the unintelligible note "(I sp. a brocher)."

Dr. Rutty was an Irish physician of merit, and one of the people called Quakers. His Diary is written with an honest simplicity and conscientious self-examination which are rarely to be found, so that while we cannot but laugh, we must feel a charitable regard for him. I shall insert some specimens:

“Tenth month, 1753—17 and 18, Morose on trifles.

“Second month, 1754, weak and fretful.

“Third month, 15. The pipe enslaves.

“Twelfth month, 17. An Hypochondriack; obnubilation from wind and indigestion. (I sp. a brocher.)

“Fifth month, 1753—31. O my doggedness.

“Ninth month. An overdose of whisky.

“Sixth month, 1756. Feasted a little piggishly.

“First month, 1757—22. A little swinish at dinner and repast.

“Second month, 14. Snappish on fasting. 27. Avant, Satan! the Lord is strengthening and promoting my progress.”

The fictitious journals in the *Spectator* and other periodical papers are not more curious than this true and faithful register.<sup>14</sup>

For my own part I have so long accustomed myself to write a Diary, that when I omit it the day seems to be lost, though for the most part I put down nothing but immaterial facts which it can serve no purpose of any value to record. For instance, the Diary of this day will be little more than that “I sat quietly at home, and wrote *The Hypochondriack*, No. LXVI. on Diaries.”

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<sup>14</sup> *The Spectator* 317, 323, 332.

No. LXVII. April 1783.

[ON MEMORY]

Τὸ δὲ μνημονευτικόν ἐστι μνήμης καὶ ἀναμνήσεως αἰτιόν τε καὶ ταμεῖον.  
—NEMESIUS.

“Memory comprises the power of recollecting and storing up ideas.”  
—JOHNSON.<sup>1</sup>

IN THE researches which I have studied to make into the human mind, none of its faculties have appeared to me so very inexplicable as memory. I once relieved myself from abstract speculation<sup>2</sup> upon the subject, by an effusion of the following lines, which, if not good verse, do at least contain some thinking:

“While metaphysics rack the sickly brain,  
What Memory is can any man explain?  
Can any man with any clearness tell  
How is produced what we all know so well?  
If human souls are of an essence pure,  
How fix ideas in them to endure?  
And if material, canst not thou, Monro,<sup>3</sup>  
The little cells of our ideas show?  
Ah! no. For here we ever, ever find  
That all philosophers alike are blind.”

<sup>1</sup> Unless it was turned off in some unrecorded conversation, this translation was not made by Dr. Samuel Johnson; neither can I find any Johnson to whom a translation of the whole work is attributed. I hazard the suggestion that the sentence may have been translated in the course of a sermon by the teacher and classical scholar Thomas Johnson, entitled *The Insufficiency of the Law of Nature* (published 1731). Since I am not able to examine this composition, my suggestion must remain an unverified guess.

The magazine text for this passage omitted the accents from τὸ and δὲ, and gave μνημονευτικὸν for μνημονευτικόν; αἰτιὸν for αἰτιόν; ταμεῖον for ταμεῖον. Boswell made no corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 10, 26, 53, 65 for other evidences of this nervousness resulting from “abstract speculation.” For Boswell’s researches into the human mind, see *Hyp.* 6, 7, 48, 63, and notes.

<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Boswell wrote his effusion the very year in which this essay was written (1783). In that year Dr. Alexander Monro secundus (1733–1817), the greatest of a family of physicians and anatomists, brought out the work for which he is chiefly famous—*Observations on the Structure and Func-*

To define Memory with precision is no easy matter. *Cicero*, in his admirable work *De Oratore*, gives it thus: “*Memoria est per quam animus repetit illa quæ fuerunt thesaurus rerum inventarum*—Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls the ideas which have existed in it, and is a treasury of the things which it has found.” But still we are not told how the faculty is exercised in either of those ways. *Nemesius*, one of the fathers who is not much known, and whose name is not to be found in Bayle’s Dictionary,<sup>4</sup> defines it to the same effect with *Cicero*, but in fewer words in the motto of this paper. He deserves to be more read, and to have more fame; for he has left us a treatise “*De Natura Hominis*—Of the Nature of Man,” so well considered and composed, that the best parts of what has been published, one age after another, and in various languages, as metaphysics are to be found there. He gives a curious system of the *instrument* of Memory, which he says is the last or inner ventricle of the brain, whereas the first or outer ventricles are the instruments of perception or thought. He affirms that, according as you hurt one or other of those instruments, you destroy either of the faculties, and he gives a very entertaining experimental account of instances in confirmation of his theory.

But still we are left quite in the dark as to the essential nature

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*tions of the Nervous System*—containing the results of observations so meticulous as to be virtual discoveries of new facts regarding the brain. Boswell would consider such a work a “sufficiently corporeal” support of material, or “mechanical,” theories of life (cf. *Hyp.* 6 n. 4; 63). Boswell consulted this gentleman on Dr. Johnson’s health in 1784 (*Life of J.*, 4. 303 ff.).

<sup>4</sup> *Nemesius*, bishop of Emesa in Syria (fl. 390), endeavors in his treatise *On Human Nature* to create a system of anthropology from the point of view of Christian philosophy. He seems to have had a greater grasp of physiology than Aristotle or Galen, and at one time was credited with having preceded Harvey in a discovery of the circulation of the blood—an interpretation of certain of his statements no longer accepted. The Platonic doctrines introduced in his pages show the influence of Hellenism on the Christianity of the fourth century.

It was Bayle’s *Biographical, Historical, and Critical Dictionary* which Johnson praised as “a very useful work for those to consult who love the biographical part of literature, which is what I love most” (*Life of J.*, 1. 492). It was recommended also by Lord Chesterfield to his son (Letter 48) as a “proper book to take for the little intervals of idle time that everybody has in the course of the day.” For other collections of biographical data, and their uses, cf. *Hyp.* 6, 63.

of the faculty of Memory, and the manner in which its operations are performed. When we talk of a storehouse of our ideas, we are only forming an imagination of something similar to an enclosed portion of space in which material objects are reposed. But who ever actually saw this storehouse, or can have any clear perception of it when he endeavours by thinking closely to get a distinct view of it? It is “the fabrick of a vision,”<sup>5</sup> and every candid man who has fairly tried to get at it will confess that he can have no confidence that it exists. I had the honour to have a conversation with *Voltaire* on this subject. I asked him, if he could give me any notion of the situation of our ideas which we have totally forgotten at the time, yet shall afterwards recollect. He paused, meditated a little, and acknowledged his ignorance in the spirit of a philosophical poet, by repeating as a very happy allusion a passage in Thomson’s *Seasons*—Aye, said he, “Where sleep the winds when it is calm?”<sup>6</sup>

*Locke*, in his essay concerning Human Understanding, exerts himself in vain to explain memory, though he treats of it with all his ability and ingenuity in the chapter *Of Retention*. He first adopts the ordinary definition:—“Memory is as it were the *Storehouse*<sup>7</sup> of our ideas; for the narrow mind of man not being capable of having many ideas under view and consideration at once, it was necessary to have a *Repository* to lay up those ideas which at another time it might have use of.” As, however, his penetration could not but see that all this is absolutely incompatible with a spiritual substance which mind is, he, immediately without any interruption or preparation whatever, proceeds very quietly, though

<sup>5</sup> *Tempest*, 4. 1. 151. The phrase is quoted again in *Hyp.* 7.

<sup>6</sup> For this conversation with *Voltaire*, see the amusing imaginative account in *Tinker, Young Boswell*, 58, and *Boswell’s report to Rousseau* (*Letters of B.*, 1. 66):

J’ai été chez M. de Voltaire. Sa conversation est la plus brillante que j’ai jamais entendu. J’avois avec lui un entretien tête-à-tête pendant une heure. C’étoit un entretien très sérieux. Il me parloit de sa religion naturelle d’une maniere dont j’étois frappé. Non obstant tout ce qui est arrivé, vous l’aurriez aimé ce soir là. Je me disois, *Aut Erasmus aut Diabolus*.

*Voltaire* quoted from *Thomson’s Winter*.

<sup>7</sup> The italics throughout the quotations from *Locke* (Bk. 2, chap. 10) are *Boswell’s*.

most effectually, to contradict what he has been assuming, and to annihilate this supposed storehouse and repository.

"But our ideas being nothing but actual perceptions in the mind, which *cease to be any thing* when there is no perception of them, this *laying up* of our ideas in the repository of the memory signifies no more but this, that the mind has a power, in many cases, to revive perceptions which it has once had, with this additional perception annexed to them, that it has had them before; and in this sense it is that our ideas are said to be in our memories, when indeed they are actually no where; but only there is an ability in the mind, when it will, to revive them again, and as it were paint them anew on itself, though some with more, some with less difficulty; some more lively, and others more obscurely. And thus it is, by the assistance of this faculty, that we are said to have all those ideas in our understandings, which though we do not actually contemplate, yet we can bring in sight, and make appear again, and be the objects of our thoughts, without the help of those sensible qualities which first imprinted them there."

It is strange that this great philosopher should have chosen to adopt a vulgar image, which he was the next moment to refute as a vulgar error. And yet in my own mind I am not sure but there may be such an analogy between the nature of spirit and that of matter, as to admit of a receptacle of ideas. How it may be I have no conception, I go on as I set out, I am only amusing myself with speculating on a curious faculty, of which, it seems to me, I must remain in full and astonished ignorance till the Great Giver of all intelligence shall be pleased to bestow a larger portion of it.<sup>8</sup>

A great politician, and at the same time a very good philosopher, observed to me, that Locke, who displayed such extraordinary powers in analyzing human understanding, shewed he had very little use of it himself, when he attempted to apply it practically to the subject of government.<sup>9</sup> I perfectly agree with the remark, however unpopular it may be in this age of popular disorder.

<sup>8</sup> This idea, so closely connected with Boswell's philosophy of perfectibility through trial and imperfection (cf. *Hyp.* 39, 52 and notes), is almost a paraphrase of Pope's "Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore" (*Essay on Man*, I. 92), which Boswell quotes in his *Letters*, 2. 306, 337, 349.

<sup>9</sup> This critic was Edmund Burke; see Boswell's applause of his powers in philosophy (*Life of J.*, I. 546):

To me it is not conceivable how Berkeley can be answered by pure reasoning; but I know

But as I am of that constitution and habit of mind, that it is more pleasing to me to admire than to find fault,<sup>10</sup> I with pleasure take an opportunity of bringing under the view of my readers an excellence in *Locke*, for which he is not usually celebrated, I mean an excellence of style. The following paragraph<sup>11</sup> upon the failure of memory, in which, however, he again falls back to the notion refuted by himself, of there being in the mind a constant substance in which ideas exist, is a piece of beautiful composition, at once intelligible, pathetick, and richly figured.

“The memory in some men, it is true, is very tenacious, even to a miracle; but yet there seems to be a constant decay of all our ideas, even of those which are struck deepest, and in minds the most retentive; so

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that the nice and difficult task was to have been undertaken by one of the most luminous minds of the present age, had not politicks “turned him from calm philosophy aside.” What an admirable display of subtlety, united with brilliance, might his contending with Berkeley have afforded us! How must we, when we reflect on the loss of such an intellectual feast, regret that he should be characterised as the man,

“Who born for the universe narrow’d his mind,  
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind”?

The identifying couplet is from Goldsmith’s *Retaliation*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *The Spectator*, 479; *Hyp.* 6, 7, 24, 59, 61; and the long discussion of admiration in the *Life of J.*, 2. 413:

I maintained that Horace was wrong in placing happiness in *Nil admirari*, for that I thought admiration one of the most agreeable of all our feelings; and I regretted that I had lost much of my disposition to admire, which people generally do as they advance in life. JOHNSON. “Sir, as a man advances in life, he gets what is better than admiration—judgement to estimate things at their true value.” I still insisted that admiration was more pleasing than judgement, as love is more pleasing than friendship. The feeling of friendship is like that of being comfortably filled with roast beef; love, like being enlivened with champagne. JOHNSON. “No, Sir; admiration and love are like being intoxicated with champagne; judgement and friendship like being enlivened. . . .”

See also Boswell’s advertisement to the second edition of the *Life of J.*, 1. 14, and *Letters of B.*, 2. 403. Compare these sentiments to his delight in expansive enthusiasm in religious feeling (*Hyp.* 54, 55), and his defense of “Farmer Burnett’s” petty enthusiasms in *Hebr.*, 126:

He who wishes to be successful, or happy, ought to be enthusiastical, that is to say, very keen in all the occupations or diversions of life. . . . But Dr. Johnson has much of the *nil admirari* in smaller concerns.

This desire to be always full of zest, full of wonder, is the most important, as it is the most genuine and most sincere, of Boswell’s romantic tendencies.

Contrast to all of these expressions Boswell’s advice to Temple in 1767, written in one of his periods of prudence (*Letters of B.*, 1. 100)—“Let us keep in mind the *nil admirari* and not expect too much.”

<sup>11</sup> Originally printed *paragraph*, and left uncorrected by Boswell.

that if they be not sometimes renewed by repeated exercise of the senses, or reflexion on those kind of objects which at first occasioned them, the print wears out, and at last there remains nothing to be seen. Thus the ideas, as well as children of our youth, often die before us: and our minds represent to us those tombs, to which we are approaching; where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away. *The pictures, drawn in our minds, are laid in fading colours*, and, if not sometimes refreshed, vanish and disappear. How much the constitution of our bodies, and the make of our animal spirits are concerned in this, and whether the temper of the brain makes this difference, that in some it retains the characters drawn on it like marble, in others like freestone, and in others little better than sand, I shall not here enquire; though it may seem probable, that the constitution of the body does sometimes influence the memory; since we often times find a disease quite strip the mind of all its ideas, and the flames of a fever in a few days calcine all those images to dust and confusion, which seemed to be as lasting, as if graved in marble."

Watts, in his Improvement of the Mind,<sup>12</sup> says "Our Memory is our natural power of retaining what we learn, and of recalling it on every occasion." This is a good definition of a good memory. And we must be content to rest upon the surface without straining to pierce into causes which are hidden from us, and which have hitherto mocked the attempts of impatient philosophers. We should resolve to wait till a longer fathom line is granted us, and then we shall be able to sound depths which we cannot do in our present state of frail imperfection.

We may in the mean time have all the uses and all the pleasures of Memory. How much may be done to enlarge and assist it I cannot tell. It is disputed whether the "*Memoria technica*—artificial Memory," which has been variously cultivated, and earnestly recommended by some, be in reality of advantage in ordinary life, though certain it is that the art of writing, by which facts, and thoughts, and expressions are rendered permanent, is

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<sup>12</sup> This work of the hymn-writer, published in 1741, was regarded as the most solid of his performances; Johnson says of it (*Life of Watts*)—

Few books have been perused by me with greater pleasure than his "Improvement of the Mind," of which the radical principle may indeed be found in Locke's "Conduct of the Understanding," but they are so expanded and ramified by Watts, as to confer upon him the merit of a work in the highest degree useful and pleasing. Whoever has the care of instructing others, may be charged with deficiency in his duty if this book is not recommended.

highly to be valued, and makes the chief distinction between barbarians and civilised society.

Many of the phenomena of Memory and circumstances attending it, while they puzzle a keen inquirer, are exceedingly amusing to a moderate observer. If there be no substance in the mind on which impressions are made, how is it that by reiterated repetition we produce this effect, that ideas and words which we are conscious were not in our minds before are now in it, and though forgotten or unobserved for a time, appear again in it? How is it that according to the common very expressive phrase, we get compositions *by heart*? If impressions are made upon some substance in the mind, may not forgetfulness of them be only that the perceptive faculty of the soul is turned to other objects, while these still remain ready to be perceived whenever the "mind's eye," glances upon them? An Hypochondriack is subject to forgetfulness, which may be owing to another cause; that there is a darkness in his mind, or that its perceptive eye is injured and weak at times. Or it may be thus: his ideas hide themselves like birds in gloomy weather; but in warm sunshine they spring forth gay and airy. It is plain they cannot rise if they are not there. Let an Hypochondriack then have his park well stocked. Let him get as many agreeable ideas into his mind as he can; and though there may in wintery days seem a total vacancy, yet when summer glows benignant, and the time of singing of birds is come, he will be delighted with gay colours and enchanting notes.

How is it that ideas ripen in the mind, so that a man shall go to bed with a very imperfect possession of what he has laboured to get by heart, and shall awake in the morning able to repeat it with distinctness and facility? Has he been at work all night without being conscious of it. Have other spirits been making impressions on his sensorium.<sup>13</sup> Are there faculties in the mind quite separate one from another, which, like the eyes of Argus, may some of them be awake while others are asleep, and is the great faculty of consciousness not perpetually essential to many mental operations?

What are we doing while we are endeavouring to recollect an idea which we have forgotten? What faculty is then exerted?

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 48, 55, 63. This paragraph is a distinguished example of Boswell's indifference to the question mark.

How is it exerted? Nothing can be more wildly mysterious. A learned and ingenious physician gave me a very pretty similitude as a slight explanation of it. Said he "You are like one who has forgotten nature, and tries all the sounds of a flute till his ear acknowledges its old acquaintance."<sup>14</sup>

And what shall we say to the preservation of tunes in the memory. How do *they* exist? It is clear there is no *sound*, and neither is there any *sense*: what is it then that does exist? the *idea* of a *sound*! Strange vapour of contemplation! Yet we are all fully conscious of it. There needs no ghost to tell us it. To quote an authority for it would be ridiculous. But one is always glad to hear *Virgil* in illustration. One of his shepherds expressly says, "*Numeros memini si verba tenerem*—I recollect the time if I had the words."<sup>15</sup>

As unaccountable a circumstance as any, concerning Memory, is the mechanical influence which we may have over it. A boy at school forgets to do something; he is beat for it, with a declaration of the purpose, "I'll teach you to remember better again, you rascal." The consequence is, that he actually does remember better again. Yet what communication can there be between his back and the spiritual faculty of Memory in his mind? I should conceive that as the body and mind are intimately united, and communicate one with another, beating him rouses the faculty of *attention*, which seems to be a distinct power in the mind, which puts all the others in exertion.<sup>16</sup>

Memory is not in a great degree in our power. But still less is forgetfulness. We have all tried it when children, and disturbed in the night by some frightful idea. But we tried it in vain. *Shakespeare* makes *Macbeth* solemnly but hopelessly ask the physician if he has any remedy to wear out direful traces from the brain; and the fable of the ancients of the river *Lethe*, by drink-

<sup>14</sup> This is no doubt another fragment of the conversation with Professor Gaubius, for whom see *Hyp.* 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Eclogues*, 9. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *The Idler*, 74—

The true art of memory is the art of attention. . . . What is read with delight is commonly retained, because pleasure always secures attention.

For Boswell's subsequent reflection that memory is not always in our power, see *Hebr.*, 76.

ing the waters of which forgetfulness was obtained, is a proof of the general impression that supernatural aid was necessary.

Mason's Ode to Memory is in my estimation a noble piece of poetry. He gives some beautiful descriptions of its presenting scenes to the mind which are past or distant. He ascribes to it an active as well as a passive power, as Locke does, though I am not sure if that be philosophically accurate, and if the activity of recollection be not distinct from Memory.<sup>17</sup> What he writes, however, is very fine, and I wish my readers to take it as a dessert of rich flavour after this paper. It is too long to insert entire after so long an essay. But I shall conclude with a blaze, by giving the first four lines:

Mother of Wisdom! thou, whose sway  
 The throng'd ideal hosts obey,  
 Who bidst their ranks now vanish, now appear,  
 Flame in the van, or darken in the rear."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 4. 147 and note, for the Johnsonian distinction between *remembering* ("to bear in mind anything; not to forget") and *recollecting* ("to recover to memory").

<sup>18</sup> The irregular punctuation of the quotation is Boswell's own. In this flattering opinion of Mason, Boswell is again at variance with Johnson in literary criticism. See *Life of J.*, 2. 383, where Johnson observes that Colman's parodies on Mason and Gray were good because they "exposed a very bad kind of writing":

BOSWELL. "Surely, Sir, Mr. Mason's *Elfrida* is a fine Poem: at least you will allow there are some good passages in it." JOHNSON. "There are now and then some good imitations of Milton's bad manner."

I often wondered at his low estimation of the writings of Gray and Mason. Of Gray's poetry I have in a former part of this work expressed my high opinion [*ibid.*, 1. 465]; and for that of Mr. Mason I have ever entertained a warm admiration. His *Elfrida* is exquisite, both in poetical description and moral sentiment; and his *Caractacus* is a noble drama. Nor can I omit paying my tribute to some of his smaller poems, which I have read with pleasure, and which no criticism shall persuade me not to like.

Cf. *Letters of B.*, 1. 217—Boswell reminding Temple how they had sat up all night reading Gray and Mason "with a noble enthusiasm."

No. LXVIII. May 1783.

## [ON EXECUTIONS]

*Mitiores Pœnæ nobis semper placuere.—JUSTINIAN.*

“We have always preferred mild punishments.”

THE question, Whether society has a right to punish individuals, especially to the extent of death, which is well denominated in Latin “*ultimum supplicium*—the last or utmost punishment,” has been treated with great attention and ingenuity by a number of casuists in law and in morals. And of late it has been discussed with elegant ability by the *Marquis di Marco*, an Italian nobleman of Mantua, whose performance well becomes that celebrated city,<sup>1</sup> while it shews that in modern times the descendants of those whom we are taught from our early years to admire, are yet worthy of admiration. So that we may quote from Addison’s beautiful letter from Italy,

And still I seem to tread on classick ground.

It is indeed a question which resolves into the powerful and irresistible plea of necessity; since we are sure society could not exist without such a right. But the exercise of it, no doubt admits of much modification, in which the wisdom and humanity of legislators has a wide field. Another Italian nobleman has done himself great honour by his admirable work “*Delle de litte e delle pene*,” which *Voltaire* has illuminated with some additional rays;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am unable to find any trace of this nobleman or of his works. He was probably a follower of Bonesana di Beccaria (see n. 2 below).

<sup>2</sup> Boswell gives his own variant of the title; properly it is *Dei Delitti e delle Pene*. It was published in Monaco, 1764, by Cesare Bonesana, Marchese di Beccaria. The title-page of the translation reads, “*An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*, translated from the Italian, with a commentary attributed to M. de Voltaire, translated from the French”; the second edition in London was printed in 1769. The short discussion deals with the types of crime and the uneven punishments meted out for them; the means to prevent crime—definiteness and simplicity in the law, education of the people, regulation of magistrates, rewards for virtue; and a plea for less rigorous sentence. The concluding chapter sums up the criticism of the amiable Marquis:

I conclude with this reflection, that the severity of punishments ought to be in proportion to the state of the nation. Among a people hardly . . . . emerged from barbarity, they should

and I can with pleasure mention, to the credit of our own nation, *Mr. Eden's Principles of Penal Law*.<sup>3</sup>

These cursory remarks are only meant to serve the purpose of introducing into the collection of my Hypochondriack Essays, another of my former writings, which is, I think, well suited to my present title.

*April 25, 1768.*<sup>4</sup>

*To the Printer of the Publick Advertiser:*

“SIR,

“THAT the people of England possess that quality called good-nature, will not be denied by any man whose mind is not fretted by some real ills, or clouded by some fanciful ones. But it must also be acknowledged that the people of England are, of all

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be most severe, as strong impressions are required; but, in proportion as the minds of men become softened by their intercourse in society, the severity of punishments should be diminished, if it be intended that the necessary relation between the object and the sensation should be maintained.

From what I have written results the following general theorem, of considerable utility, though not conformable to custom, the common legislator of nations: That a punishment may not be an act of violence, of one, or of many, against a private member of society, it should be public, immediate, and necessary, the least possible in the case given, proportioned to the crime, and determined by the laws.

In my copy of this work, a Scottish edition of 1807, a humanitarian former reader has underscored the *least possible in the case given*, as he has underscored the Marquis's arguments against severe punishments throughout, and such remarks in the Commentary following as “I flattered myself that [this book] would be a means of softening the remains of barbarism in the laws of many nations.” Cf. n. 15.

Cesare Bonesana (1735–1793) was invited to Russia by Catherine the Great as a result of the vogue of his book, which was translated into all the important European languages; he preferred, however, to remain in Milan, where he instituted a school of political science and attracted to his views a number of devoted disciples. The *Dizionario Biografico Universale* says of him:

Ecco colui al quale la umanità avrà obbligo tale, che durerà lontano quanto la memoria della barbarie che fino al passato secolo contaminò le leggi e le consuetudini criminale.

<sup>3</sup> William Eden, first Baron Auckland (1744–1814), published his *Principles of Penal Law* in 1772.

<sup>4</sup> Boswell gives a wrong date. The essay was printed in the Publick Advertiser for April 26, 1768; April 25 was a Sunday.

nations in the world, the most desirous of seeing spectacles of cruelty. Bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and even throwing at cocks, were for many and many a year the delight of the English; and it is not long since assemblies of *good-natured* people were deliberately held to see their fellow-creatures beat, bruise, and sometimes actually kill each other."

"Though the desire of seeing spectacles of cruelty has peculiarly prevailed in England, it has more or less been the passion of mankind in all ages and countries. Hence the various satires against it by poets; hence the various attempts to account for it by philosophers. Lucretius, who was both a poet and a philosopher, refers it to self-love, as we may see from that celebrated passage,

"Suave mari magno turbantibus æthera vertis."<sup>5</sup>

"He thinks that men love to behold scenes of distress, that they may hug themselves in security, and relish more their own safety and ease, by comparing themselves with those who are suffering. Though I, as well as every rational and virtuous man, must think that Lucretius is in general a very false and a very hurtful writer; yet I must candidly own that he is often ingenious and just in his observations. In the present case he certainly has a great deal of merit; though I would be for compounding his system with that of the Abbé du Bos, who accounts for our desire of seeing spectacles of cruelty from the universal wish that we all have to be moved;<sup>6</sup> that is, to have our souls agitated; for to be sure there is nothing so irksome to a man of lively sensations, as to have his faculties thrown into a kind of torpor, so that in Shakespeare's words,

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<sup>5</sup> *De Rerum Nat.*, 2. 1, in Boswell's own version; properly, the line ends *æquora ventis*.

<sup>6</sup> This observation comes probably from *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719), by Abbé Jean-Baptiste DuBos, historian, critic, and lesser diplomat (1670-1742). His work was praised by Voltaire, in his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, 1. 81, as the most useful performance of the kind in all Europe; and Johnson (*Life of J.*, 2. 103) mentions it as sound criticism.

Boswell quotes the Abbé again in his third essay on *The Profession of a Player* (London Magazine, 39. 516), to the effect that if the happiness of man consists in having his mind agitated constantly, actors "must be of all mankind the most happy."



The IDLE PRENTICE Executed at Tyburn.



From the engraving by Hogarth

*Execution at Tyburn*

"They cream and mantle like a standing pool."<sup>7</sup>

This will more fully account for what I am endeavouring to explain, and will make human nature appear not so grossly selfish as Lucretius paints it."

"Of all publick spectacles, that of a capital execution draws the greatest number of spectators. And I must confess that I myself am never absent from any of them. Nor can I accuse myself of being more hard hearted than other people. On the contrary, I am persuaded that nobody feels more sincerely for the distresses of his fellow-creatures than I do, or would do more to relieve them. When I first attended executions, I was shocked to the greatest degree. I was in a manner convulsed with pity and terror, and for several days, but especially nights after, I was in a very dismal situation. Still, however, I persisted in attending them, and by degrees my sensibility abated; so that I can now see one with great composure, and my mind is not afterwards haunted with frightful thoughts: though for a while a certain degree of gloom remains upon it. I can account for this curiosity in a philosophical manner, when I consider that death is the most aweful object before every man, who ever directs his thoughts seriously towards futurity; and that it is very natural that we should be anxious to see people in that situation which affects us so much."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Boswell quotes from memory *Mer. of Ven.*, I. i. 89—"cream and mantle like a standing pond." Cf. *Hyp.* 4 and *Letters of B.*, I. 192, where the line is misquoted as it is here.

<sup>8</sup> See *Life of J.*, 2. 107-108, in which Boswell is obviously trying to lead a conversation with Johnson (1769) into such topics as he discusses in this essay:

I mentioned to him that I had seen the execution of several convicts at Tyburn, two days before, and that none of them seemed to be under any concern. JOHNSON. "Most of them, Sir, have never thought at all." BOSWELL. "But is not the fear of death natural to man?" JOHNSON. "So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it. . . ."

Talking of our feeling for the distresses of others;—JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, there is much noise made about it, but it is greatly exaggerated. No, Sir, we have a certain degree of feeling to prompt us to do good: more than that, Providence does not intend. It would be misery to no purpose." BOSWELL. "But suppose now, Sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged." JOHNSON. "I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer." BOSWELL. "Would you eat your dinner that day, Sir?" JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir; and eat it as if he were eating it with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life tomorrow, friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will

It is true indeed that none of us, who go to see an execution have any idea that we are to be executed, and few of us need be under any apprehension whatever of meeting with that fate. But dying publickly at Tyburn, and dying privately in one's bed, are only different modes of the same thing. They are both death; they are

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eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind."

It was perhaps this passage which provoked the parody on the *Life of J.* in *The Looker On* (published *ca.* 1792-1793), entitled *Lesson in Biography, or How to Write the Life of One's Friend*. It was attributed to James Beresford (*Dublin Univ. Mag.*, 74. 313):

Hanging was mentioned in the course of the conversation, and I observed that it was a very awkward position. Pozz. "No, Sir; hanging is not an awkward position. It is proper, Sir, that a man whose actions tend to criminal obliquity should himself be made perpendicular at last." I told Dr. Pozz that I had lately been in company with a number of gentlemen, all of whom could recollect some friend or other who had been hanged. Pozz. "Yes, Sir; we know those who *have* been hanged. That is a circumstance we can easily recollect, and may safely mention without fear of offence, but we must not name those who *deserve* it."

Contrast to these characteristically hardy sentiments, both actual and parodial, the expressions of sympathy for condemned wretches in Johnson's *The Rambler*, 114.

Boswell's attendance at executions is also revealed in *Life of J.*, 4. 379—"I visited him in the morning, after having been present at the shocking sight of fifteen men executed before Newgate"—and in *Boswelliana*, 308 (see n. 11).

Frequently Boswell visited condemned men for days before the execution, and rode with them in the mourning coach to the place of death. See *Life of J.*, 3. 436 for an allusion to his presence at the trial of Hackman the murderer; later he wrote reports of the execution for his own periodical (*London Magazine* 48. 189) and for the *St. James Chronicle* (April 1779). See also his *Tour to Corsica*, account of condemned criminals, and *Boswelliana*, 300. In 1790 he persuaded Sir Joshua Reynolds to go with him to an execution, and the old artist was so much criticized for it that he wrote a letter defending himself, which was found among his papers at his death (*Leslie & Taylor, Life of Reynolds*, 2. 588).

Boswell's motive in these visits is explained variously; Scott, in his notes on the Croker *Correspondence and Diaries*, 2. 33, assigns it to an unbalanced mind; Fitzgerald (*Life of Boswell*, 2. 106) states that Boswell haunted Newgate and formed a friendship with its governor because he wished to gather notes on his history of the *Beggar's Opera*. He is probably to be trusted in his own diagnosis of his state of mind, though that itself may simply be native morbidity, supported by some authoritative pronouncement such as this, in *The Spectator*, 289:

A battle or a triumph are conjectures in which not one man in a million is likely to be engaged: but when we see a person at the point of death, we cannot forbear being attentive to every thing he says or does, because we are sure that some time or other we shall ourselves be in the same melancholy circumstances.

Cf. *Hyp.* 14-16; 54 n. 4; 55; *Letters of B.*, 2. 285.

both that wonderous, that alarming scene of quitting all that we have ever seen, heard, or known, and at once passing into a state of being totally unknown to us, and in which we cannot tell what may be our situation. Therefore it is that I feel an irresistible impulse to be present at every execution, as I there behold the various effects of the near approach of death, according to the various tempers of the unhappy sufferers, and by studying them I learn to quiet and fortify my own mind."

"I shall never forget the last execution I saw at Tyburn, when Mr. Gibson, the attorney, for forgery, and Benjamin Payne, for an highway robbery, were executed.<sup>9</sup> Poor Payne was a thin young lad of twenty, in a mean dress, and a red night-cap, with nothing to discriminate him from the many miserable beings who are penitent and half dead with fear. But Mr. Gibson was indeed an extraordinary man. He came from Newgate in a coach, with some friends attending him. I met the mournful procession in Oxford-road; and I declare that if I had not been told it, I should not have known which was Mr. Gibson. He was drawn backwards, and looked as calm and easy as ever I saw a man in my life. He was dressed in a full suit of black, wore his own hair round and in a natural curl, and a hat. When he came to the place of execution he was allowed to remain a little in the coach. A signal was then given him that it was time to approach the fatal tree. He took leave of his friends, stepped out of the coach, and walked firmly to the cart. He was helped up upon it, as he was pinioned and had not the free use of his arms. When he was upon the cart, he gave his hat to the executioner, who immediately took off Mr. Gibson's cravat, unloosed his shirt neck, and fixed the rope. Mr. Gibson never once altered his countenance. He refreshed his mouth by sucking a sweet orange. He shewed no stupid insensibility; nor did he affect to brave it out like those hardened

<sup>9</sup> According to the *Annual Register*, James Gibson was tried in 1766 for forging a document purporting to be written by the clerk of the report-office in the court of Chancery, with intent to defraud Mr. Hunt of Stratford-on-Avon of the sum of £437 and odd. He was not sentenced until March 1, 1768. On the 25th of the same month he was executed with Benjamin Payne, "a foot-pad, . . . . at Tyburn. Gibson was carried to execution in a mourning coach, and desired his fellow-sufferer might be permitted to accompany him, but his request was not granted" (*Ann. Reg.*, 9. 52; 11. 83).

wretches who boast that they die hard. He appeared to all the spectators a man of sense and reflexion, of a mind naturally sedate and placid. He submitted with a manly and decent resolution to what he knew to be the just punishment of the law. Mr. Moore, the Ordinary of Newgate, discharged his duty with much earnestness, and a fervour for which I and all around me esteemed and loved him.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Moore seems worthy of his office, which, when justly considered, is a very important one, if administering divine comfort to multitudes of miserable beings, be important. Poor Payne seemed to rely on that mercy which I trust has not been refused him—Mr. Gibson seemed truly devout; and, in short, from first to last, his behaviour was the most perfect that I ever saw, or indeed could conceive of one in his unhappy circumstances.—I wish, Sir, I may not have detained you too long with a letter on subjects of a serious but I will not say of a gloomy cast, because from my manner of viewing them I do say that they become matters of curious speculation, and are relieved of their dreary ideas.<sup>11</sup> I am, Sir,

“Your constant reader,  
“MORTALIS.”

After an interval of fifteen years, I have little to add to this occasional essay. But I cannot but mention in justification of myself, from a charge of cruelty in having gone so much formerly to see executions, that the curiosity which impels people to be present at such affecting scenes, is certainly a proof of sensibility not of callousness. For it is observed, that the greatest proportion of the spectators is composed of women; and I do not apprehend that my readers will impute a barbarous severity to the fair sex, though it is common for lovers to represent them as metaphorically cruel. But in the one case they are cruel to others to be kind to themselves, by avoiding what is disagreeable to them. Whereas in the other case the pleasure must be from the sufferings of others

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<sup>10</sup> Mr. Moore was replaced by the Reverend Mr. Vilette, whom Boswell celebrates in his turn, in 1773 (*Life of J.*, 4. 380).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Boswelliana*, 308:

At an execution in the Grass Mercat, Boswell was observing that if you will consider it abstractly there is nothing terrible in it. “No doubt, Sir,” replied Mr. Love, “if you will abstract everything terrible that it has about it, nothing terrible will remain.”

independent of any such reference. That there, however, is such a pleasure I am afraid is true; and in support of my opinion, I bring no less authority than Edmund Burke, who maintains it in his *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful*.<sup>12</sup> Yet let it not be supposed that this pleasure arising from agitation, prevents the finest feelings and effects of compassion; I am sure it does not.

As the great Justinian nobly expressed himself, I should wish that as *mild punishments* as are consistent with terrore were always inflicted. It is indeed astonishing how men have been found willing and able to execute some of the horrible sentences which have been put in execution upon some criminals. One shudders to think of them; and I shall not wound the minds of my readers by reciting particulars. They who wish to be shocked or to gratify a monstrous curiosity, may read the tortures of *Ravaillac* or *Damiens*.<sup>13</sup> A mode of death which strikes terrore into spectators, without excruciating the unfortunate objects of legal vengeance, seems to be the most eligible. I, therefore, think that the faces of those who are hanged should not be covered, as in Britain, but exposed, as is the custom upon the continent, that the distortions may be seen, which covered or uncovered must take place.<sup>14</sup> I also

<sup>12</sup> "We have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others." This is merely a paraphrase of the passage in Lucretius quoted at the beginning of this essay.

<sup>13</sup> Ravaillac (1578-1610), assassin of Henri IV, was drawn and quartered; Damiens (1714-1757), having struck at Louis XV with a dagger, was wrenched apart by four horses. It was at this execution that M. de la Condamine, that scientifically minded nobleman, sidled into the throng of soldiers in order to watch the muscular contortions of the body during the torture. The archers wished to eject him, but the executioner stayed them with the remark, "*Laissez Monsieur; c'est un amateur.*"

The same anecdote is told of George Selwyn (d. 1791), who like Boswell was known for a strange taste in horrors and criminals.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 4. 217: six months after the date of this essay, in November 1783, hanging at Tyburn was discontinued, in order to do away with the procession of thieves, beggars, and curiosity-seekers who followed the condemned carts, and to reduce the crowd and the disorder at the place of execution. The convicts were hanged instead in the street outside Newgate prison. Both Boswell and Johnson disapproved of the change, for the same reasons which Boswell gives in *The Hypochondriack*:

[Johnson] said, . . . . "The age is running mad after innovation, . . . . men are to be

think that the punishment of throwing criminals from the Tarpeian rock in ancient Rome was a very judicious one. But the best I have ever discovered is one practised in Modern Rome, which is called "*Macellare—to butcher.*" The criminal is placed upon a scaffold, and the executioner knocks him on the head with a great iron hammer, then cuts his throat with a large knife, and lastly, hews him in pieces with an ax; in short, treats him exactly like an ox in the shambles. The spectators are struck with prodigious terror; yet the poor wretch who is stunned into insensibility by the blow, does not actually suffer much.<sup>15</sup>

But, indeed, death, simple death, when slowly and solemnly inflicted, will be fully sufficient to answer the purposes of publick punishment, as is very well demonstrated by Dr. Mandeville,<sup>16</sup> in

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hanged in a new way; even Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation." It having been argued that this was an improvement,—"No, Sir, (said he, eagerly,) it is *not* an improvement: they object that the old method drew together a number of spectators. Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they do not draw spectators they don't answer their purpose. The old method was most satisfactory to all parties; the publick was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it. Why is all this to be swept away?" I perfectly agree with Dr. Johnson upon this head, and am persuaded that executions now, the solemn procession being discontinued, have not nearly the effect which they formerly had. Magistrates both in London, and elsewhere, have, I am afraid, in this had too much regard to their own ease.

<sup>15</sup> In spite of the logic of Boswell and Johnson, and this example of brilliant statecraft in Rome, it is clear that the noble author of the *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* was not alone in his endeavor to lessen the horrors of public vengeance. One "Nicholas Owen Smythe," who places himself in "St. James Street, June 9th 1789" formerly owned my copy of Lady Craven's *Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*, and he adds to her description of Pisa a marginal note on the status of the criminals there:

The slaves who sweep the streets of Pisa are numerous, their crimes are marked upon their jackets which are of Blue Cloath and are all the same—the Grand Duke will not have an execution during his Reign, therefore the convicts are confined for Life at Pisa.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard de Mandeville (1670-1733), born in Holland, adopted England as his home; he was a physician, with little practice and less affliction because of that fact. His chief work is *The Fable of the Bees* (1705), in which he puts forth the paradoxical theory that private vices are really benefits because they stimulate trade and invention. He was writing for the entertainment of his own class, rather than seriously suggesting a reforming principle. The work went into numerous editions—nine by 1755. Boswell's comment is strange, since it is obvious that Mandeville influenced Johnson's economics much (cf. *Life of J.*, 3. 65; 331-33). Other works of Mandeville are *A Search into the Nature of Society* (1723); *The Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity*

An Essay upon the Increase of Robberies, in which he has written with a very different spirit from that which prompted his very shrewd, lively, and entertaining, but dangerous *Fable of the Bees*.

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*in War* (1732); *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions* (1711, 1715, 1730).

The performance which Boswell cites in the essay must be quoted from memory; the only composition of Mandeville which I can find at all related to the subject is his *Enquiry into the causes of the frequent executions at Tyburn: and a proposal for some regulations concerning felons in prison. . . . To which is added, a discourse on transportation; and a method to render that punishment more effectual* (1725).

No. LXIX. June 1783.

## [ON SWEARING]

Μέγαν δόκον ὁμόσας. —PINDAR OLYMP.<sup>1</sup>

Having sworn a great oath.

**S**WEARING is one of the most ancient and universal practices of mankind; and although we easily perceive solemn oaths upon great occasions to be a natural mode of confirming veracity and confidence, it has often appeared to me not a little difficult to account for the antiquity and universality of imprecations in the common intercourse of society. Yet so prevalent is the use of them that we read of no period of time, nor are acquainted with any nation, in which it is not to be traced. Nay, we find a propensity to it so wonderfully prevalent, that the powers of moralists and legislators have been exerted to restrain it, but have by no means fully succeeded. Philosophers of old, as well as modern divines, have ably exposed its profaneness and bad effects; and in the statute books of civilized states there are many laws against Cursing and Swearing, by which it is prohibited under penalties. Yet let us go into almost any company, in any part of the known world, and we shall too soon be satisfied that a vice to which it should seem there is no temptation abounds in an amazing degree.

The antiquity and universality of oaths, in whatever sense, is, I think, one proof among many of the existence of a Supreme Spirit; for it shews the consent of nations in that belief. In the first volume of *Histoire de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, there is an excellent dissertation “*Sur les Serments des Anciens*,” by *M. l'Abbé Massieu*. The ingenious writer observes, that originally men swore by the true God, the Most High, the Lord of heaven and earth. But when the proper notion of the Divinity came to be corrupted, and polytheism was introduced, swearing followed the fate of religion, “*et si le monde fut tout surpris de se trouver rempli d'une multitude prodigieuse de dieux*

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is not from Pindar; Boswell quotes from memory Homer's *Iliad*, 1. 233—μέγαν δόκον ὁμοῦμαι. The magazine text omitted accents and breathing marks from μέγαν, δόκον, ὁμόσας; it also had *greet* for *great*. Boswell made no corrections for either Greek or English.

*monstreux, il ne le fut pas moins de se voir comme inondé d'un déluge de serments ridicules*—And if the world was confounded to find itself filled with a prodigious multitude of monstrous gods, it was not less so to see itself as it were drowned in a deluge of ridiculous oaths.”<sup>2</sup> Such of my readers as wish to have their curiosity gratified upon the subject, may find in this dissertation a learned collection of particulars, interspersed with good remarks well expressed.

Though I have the comfort to think my practice has been blameless in that respect,<sup>3</sup> my opinion as to the impious immorality of swearing in passion, or in levity of talk, was never quite settled, till in the view of writing this essay I looked into the four sermons which that very distinguished prelate, Archbishop Secker, preached against it from the well-known text, James v. 12. *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, &c.* In these admirable discourses the Archbishop has in the first place demonstrated the lawfulness of oaths upon solemn occasions, from the utility, and in some cases even almost necessity of them, and shewn the practice to be sanctified by the awful example of God himself in several texts in scripture, by that of our SAVIOUR, when he told the Jews there should no sign be given to them but that of the prophet Jonas; and who, while in the lowly form which he condescended to assume in carrying on the great mystery of redemption,

<sup>2</sup> The author was probably Guillaume Massieu (1665–1722), professor of Greek at the Collège de France, and member of the Académie des Inscriptions and of the Académie Française.

In the quotation from the Abbé's work, the rendering of *monstreux* and *déluge* shows Boswell's carelessness in either copying or correcting; cf. *Hyp.* 20 n. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Boswell to Rousseau (*Letters of B.*, 1. 86):

Mme Boy-de-Latour m'a informé que vous êtes à Paris. Je donnerais beaucoup que vous eussiez vu avec quelle joie je reçus cette information: ... Je ne jure jamais; autrement vous auriez une volée de ces imprécations par lesquelles les furieux Anglais expriment une satisfaction extraordinaire.

All the same, Boswell was once reproved by Johnson (*Life of J.*, 2. 127) for such a fault; he had concluded a “little epigrammatick song . . . on matrimony” with the lines,

O! by my soul, my honest Mat,  
I fear she has nine lives.

My illustrious friend said, “It is very well, Sir; but you should not swear.” Upon which I altered “O! by my soul,” to “alas, alas!”

submitted to answer the High Priest under an adjuration “by the living God;” and by that of the holy apostles in many passages: and in the second place has demonstrated the positive evil not only of “taking the name of God in vain,” or introducing it into trifling discourse, or without some very important reason, but of all irreverent mention of sacred subjects. He enumerates many of the best of the heathen sages who wrote against common swearing as hurtful to religion, and he fully justifies the wisdom of St. James’s prohibition in that sense of the words, by shewing how much it lessens the celestial awe of piety, and how inconsistent it is in other respects with the spirit of Christianity, as it inflames violence and wrath, and certainly offends the good and the gentle. He very fairly argues that this unprofitable vice is unbecoming in well-bred men, and I hope my fair readers will forgive me for quoting the following passage, for which I am very sorry to think there is any occasion: “But, above all, the most distant advances toward any sort of profaneness in discourse, should be scrupulously avoided by that sex, which cannot yet plead any established custom for it; and whose esteem from the other depends so very greatly on the gentleness and delicacy of their conversation, that they will be far from finding their account (whatever they may fancy) in exchanging it for a confident behaviour, and offensive expressions of masculine boldness.” I would earnestly recommend to all my readers a calm and attentive perusal of these four sermons, in a collection, which, I am assured by valuable authority, contains an instructive and beautiful system of the Christian life, by one who was himself a noble example of it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury (1693–1768), whom even Pope called “decent” (*Epil. Sat.*, 2. 71), had had a desire for the religious life from his early youth, but he entered upon a career in the study of medicine, because of the confusion of sects in his day. Led back to the church by various friends high in its councils, he was ordained in 1723, and by 1732 was chaplain to the king, by 1737 Bishop of Oxford, and in 1758 Bishop of Canterbury. He was a great favorite with George III, whom he had baptized, confirmed, crowned, and married. He had the horror of “enthusiasm” common among the clear-thinking men of his time, but he was extremely generous to the cause of the Scots clergy after their share in the rebellion of 1745, and advocated the extension of the episcopate to the American church. His sermons were composed with studied simplicity of style; four volumes of the sermons were printed during Archbishop Secker’s lifetime, and one more after his death. Boswell and

They who attempt to despise a conviction of the criminality of cursing and swearing as weak scrupulosity, should be informed, that by repeated acts of parliament it is held to be no slight offence, and when so informed, it is thought they would be too arrogant, were they to set their inconsiderate notions above the well-weighed resolves of Senates. The earliest acts against swearing which we find in this island were passed in Scotland in 1551, in the reign of the beauteous Queen Mary, and in 1581, in the reign of her son James VI. of Scotland, afterwards I. of England. Perhaps the “*præfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, the violent temper of the Scots” made such a law necessary amongst them sooner than amongst the English. The first English act against swearing is in 1623, in the reign of James I. and begins “Forasmuch as all profane swearing and cursing is forbidden by the word [of]<sup>5</sup> God.” The next is in 1695, in the reign of William and Mary. But so late as 1746, in the reign of George II. there is “an act more effectually to prevent profane cursing and swearing,” and as a short sermon by King, Lords, and Commons to some who would have a superficial contemptuous prejudice against a sermon by a clergyman, I shall here insert the preamble.

“Forasmuch as the horrid, impious and execrable vices of profane cursing and swearing (so highly displeasing to Almighty GOD, and loathsome and offensive to every Christian) are become so frequent and notorious, that unless speedily and effectually punished, they may justly provoke the Divine vengeance to increase the many calamities these nations now labour under.”

That I may produce the deliberate suffrage of all the three kingdoms against Cursing and Swearing, I am to mention that similar acts to those of the English parliament have been passed in Ireland, a country remarkable for the warm blood of its inhabitants,

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Johnson both speak of Archbishop Secker with hearty approval in the *Life of J.*, (1. 39; 4. 35).

The “valuable authority” whom Boswell quotes is no doubt Bishop Porteus, who had been one of the Archbishop’s chaplains, and who, with another chaplain, Dr. Stinton, edited Secker’s works in accordance with his request (3d. edition, with a life of Secker by Porteus, 1775). Boswell knew Dr. Porteus, as he tells Temple in his *Letters*. See n. 14 below.

<sup>5</sup> Inserted by the editor. See *Hyp.* 58 n. 15 for Boswell’s collection of these early acts.

whose talk is particularly characterized in plays and novels, by a variety of oaths.<sup>6</sup>

I have heard of a preacher in Holland who in admonishing his hearers against the vice of swearing, used very gravely to repeat in the pulpit, the most usual and shocking execrations which he charged them to avoid. This I dare say, was thought ludicrous. Yet the same thing actually occurs in the first act of the Scottish Parliament to which I have referred. Thus it begins:

“Item, Because notwithstanding the oft and frequent preachings, in detestation of the grievous and abominable (a) aithes swearing, execrationes, and blasphematioun of the name of GOD (b) swearand in vain be his precious (c) blud, bodie, passion, and wounds, Devil (d) stick, cummer, gore, roist or riefe them, and sik uther (e) oug-sum aithes and execrationes, against the command of God, zit the samin is cum in sik ane ungodlie use amangst the people of this realme, baith of great and small estates, that dailie and hourelie may be heard amangst them, open blasphemation of God’s name, and Majestie, to the greate contemptio thereof, and bringing of the ire and wrath of GOD upon the people.”

(a) *Oaths.* (b) *Swearing.* (c) *Blood.* (d) *Stab.* (e) *Ugly.*

Nay, there is something similar in the civil law, Novell 77, where certain horrible oaths are specified, and where profane swearing is held in such abomination that it is classed with the sin

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Life of J.*, 2. 190:

The General [Paoli] said, that all barbarous nations swore from a certain violence of temper, that could not be confined to earth, but was always reaching at the powers above. He said, too, that there was greater variety of swearing, in proportion as there was a greater variety of religious ceremonies.

See also the chapter on profanation in the commentary attributed to Voltaire, attached to that *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* cited by Boswell in the preceding essay; like the rest of the work, the chapter advocates sweet reasonableness in judgment:

It [is] somewhat difficult to determine what [is] blasphemy. Expressions frequently escape from a man in a passion, from joy, or even in conversation, which are merely expletives, such as the *selā* and the *vah* of the Hebrews, the *pol* and *ædepol* of the Latins, as also *per deos immortales*, an expression frequently used without the least intention of swearing by the immortal gods.

The words which are called oaths and blasphemy are commonly vague terms which may be variously interpreted. The law by which they are punished seems to be founded on that of the Jews, which says, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*. The best commentators are of opinion, that this commandment relates to perjury; and there is the more reason to believe them right, as the word *shavé* which is translated *in vain*, properly signifies perjury. Now, what analogy can there be between perjury and *cabo de dios, cadedis, sanguine, ventrebleu, corpo di dio?* &c.

against nature. The words against cursing are, “*Quoniam quidam blasphema verba et sacramenta de DEO jurant, DEUM ad iracundiam provocantes, istis injungimus abstinere ab hujusmodi et aliis blasphemis verbis, et non jurare per capillos et caput et his proxima verba.*” It is unnecessary to translate this. The Emperour proceeds to declare, that on account of such crimes the land is visited with famine, earthquakes, and pestilence; and he denounces the punishment of death.

The common saying that there is no pleasure in cursing and swearing, I should think cannot be true, otherwise that vice could not be so frequent as we know it to be, in spite of all the provisions against it. Indeed I have heard of a roaring ’squire who observed upon this, “No pleasure! no pleasure! Why I’d give up half my estate rather than not be allowed to swear.” Here then was an end of the argument upon that head with *him*. In truth there is a certain kind of gratification in the *force* of which swearing is expressive; and although it has been said that “no man is born of a swearing constitution,” yet, I imagine all men are at times inclined to swear, either as an immediate proof of their earnestness, or as giving vent to a strong passion. A gentleman of a violent temper, but of strict religious principles, was one day in high indignation at one of his colliers, whom he chased round a coal-pit with his stick brandished to beat him. The fellow had more agility than his master, and seeing him ready to burst with anger, he stopped a little, looked him in the face, and very imprudently said to him “Your honour’s at a great loss that you dare not curse.” In that case swearing would have been a relief to the gentleman, and consequently a pleasure. There is a remarkable instance to the same effect in a passion of a very different nature in Captain *Inglefield*’s narrative of the loss of his Majesty’s ship the *Centaur*, and of the wonderful escape of himself and a few more, after being lost seventeen days in an open boat, almost destitute of necessities.<sup>7</sup> He relates that one of the seamen upon being certain that

<sup>7</sup> Captain John Nicholson Inglefield (1748–1828) entered the naval service in 1759; in his later career he was chiefly connected with the fortunes of Commodore [Viscount] Hood, by whom he was appointed to the *Centaur*, a ship of 74 guns, in August 1781. He commanded her in actions off the American coast in 1782, and in August of that year started home with the convoy under command of Rear Admiral Graves. On September 16 the *Centaur* was struck by a

he saw land "broke out into an immoderate *swearing* fit of joy, from which he could not be restrained." I have had the pleasure of being in company with Captain *Inglefield* since his dreadful danger, and found him most obligingly communicative. He told me that this seaman uttered a number of most extraordinary oaths, which seemed to be invented in the moment of his transport. So far as my opinion can have weight I would here do justice to that narrative, which is uncommonly simple, clear, and pathetic, and has a propriety of which the pious *Hervey* justly regrets the want, in the History of Anson's Voyage. I mean an acknowledgement of Divine Providence.<sup>8</sup>

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hurricane, and after keeping afloat for seven days, suddenly filled and sank. Of the whole crew, only *Inglefield*, the master, a midshipman of 15, and ten sailors saved themselves. In a high sea, in a small boat, with very little provision, they endured great suffering; the Captain maintained order by obliging the party to divert themselves with songs, stories, anything to distract their minds. On the sixteenth day after losing the ship, when provisions had given out completely, they reached *Fayal*; one man died just as they sighted land. Captain *Inglefield* was examined by a committee on his return to England, and fully acquitted; his *Narrative concerning the Loss of His Majesty's Ship the Centaur* was published in 1783. It is said that he never quite recovered from the effects of this experience.

It is, I think, to this gentleman that *Boswell* addressed the note dated 26 May, 1783 (*Letters of B.*, 2. 317), concerning the manner in which he might send to the British Museum the blanket which had served as a sail during his "very dangerous navigation."

<sup>8</sup> George Anson, later Baron Anson of Soberton (1697-1762), the reformer of the British navy, is one of the most romantically heroic figures in eighteenth-century naval exploits. In 1740, during the war with Spain, he was sent with a small fleet to attack the South American Spanish possessions. Two years of fighting storms, sickness, and a few unprotected Spanish coast towns reduced his men from 961 to 335 in number, and finally caused him to gather all the survivors in his own *Centurion*; in this he managed to seize a rich galleon of the Mexican-Philippine trade, and returned to England in 1744 established as a rich man for life. In the voyage he had circumnavigated the globe. In 1745 he was appointed rear-admiral of the white, and in 1751 became first lord of the admiralty; in these capacities, supported by politicians who were afraid to ignore longer the popular demand for reform of the navy, Anson regulated the dockyards, the accounting system of the navy board, professional promotion, and discipline.

The best history of his famous voyage, popular among English schoolboys for years, was written by Anson's chaplain, Richard *Walter*, in 1748; an inferior account had been published three years before by the schoolmaster of the *Centurion*, *Pascoe Thomas*. It is evident that the admiral was anxious to

The same rule I think should be applied to swearing, that Horace gives with regard to the introduction of a Divinity into the story of a Poem "*Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus.*"<sup>9</sup> Let not a God appear unless when there is a difficulty worthy of such interposition." The multiplicity of oaths judicially taken has been long a just subject of complaint, as rendering that appeal to the Searcher of hearts too familiar. I should think that in the administration of justice a discretionary power might be well exercised in that matter, so that an oath should not be taken but after many steps, and with much caution. The form too of swearing should be very solemn to impress awe and recollection. I have heard of a man who was ready to deny a debt upon oath in the usual manner, but acknowledged it to be just, when desired by the Judge to imprecate that the devil might instantly appear and carry him off if it was not so. Scotland has I think the advantage of England in the form of administering an oath. In England the words are hurried over by the clerk of court, and the person who swears only kisses the book, whereas in Scotland, the Judge solemnly pronounces and makes the person who swears pronounce after him what follows: "I swear by God himself, and as I shall answer to God at the great day of judgement, I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."<sup>10</sup>

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have his deeds perpetuated in good style, since he employed one Captain Cheap to "look out for a proper person to write his voyage" (note by Birkbeck Hill in *Life of J.*, I. 135-36).

<sup>9</sup> *Ars Poet.*, 191. The quotation appears also in *The Spectator*, 315.

<sup>10</sup> This form worked wonders in one case; cf. *Hebr.* 445:

Some years after our Tour, a cause was tried in the Court of Session, where the principal fact to be ascertained was, whether a ship-master . . . . was drowned in one particular year, or in the year after. . . . One of [the witnesses], a very respectable Chieftain . . . . had in this case, previous to this publick examination, not only said, but attested under his hand, that he had seen the ship-master in the year subsequent to that in which the court was finally satisfied he was drowned. When interrogated with the strictness of judicial inquiry, and under the awe of an oath, he recollect<sup>ed</sup> himself better, and retracted what he had formerly asserted, apologising for his inaccuracy, by telling the judges, "A man will *say* what he will not *swear*." By many he was much censured, and it was maintained that every gentleman would be as attentive to truth without the sanction of an oath, as with it. Dr. Johnson, though himself was distinguished at all times by a scrupulous adherence to truth, controverted this proposition; and as a proof that this was not, though it ought to be, the case, urged the very different decisions of elections under Mr. Grenville's Act [to try elections before a select committee with as much rigor as used in deciding any title], from those formerly made. "Gentlemen will not pronounce upon oath what they would have said, and voted in the house, without that sanction."

The prostitution of oaths to trivial matters must defeat the very purpose of solemn asseverations. It is to be regretted that rash swearing is in general so habitual, that keenness or being in earnest is by many supposed to require it as a test. But we know it is a false test. When the Apostle Peter had twice denied his **LORD**, and was pressed the third time, we read "then began he to curse and to swear, saying I know not the man."<sup>11</sup> His denial was still as false as before. Had he, however, been called before a tribunal and put upon oath in form, it is probable he would have shrunk from perjury. Many who attest falsehood by tremendous imprecations in their ordinary discourse, would not do it deliberately. Common swearing, therefore, is pure profaneness. It has been alledged as an excuse for it that some kinds of men, and sailors in particular, cannot be commanded without swearing. But that this is not true has been proved by the respectable examples of the present Earl of *Northesk* and of the late Captain *Hamilton*, brother to the Earl of *Abercorn*, who while captains in the navy, maintained a perfect authority on board their ships, where an oath was never heard, but the duties of religion were constantly performed.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Boswell quotes from memory *Mark*, 14. 71; in the original, "this man."

<sup>12</sup> William Carnegie, Earl of *Northesk* (1758–1831), admiral and son of an admiral (the 6th Earl, George), was made lieutenant in 1777, and served in the West Indies till 1782, when he acquired post rank. Later he served under Nelson at Trafalgar, and as a result of his action on that occasion, was made Knight of the Bath in 1806. Ten years before his death he was made Rear Admiral of Great Britain. It was perhaps his reasonable mildness which caused the mutinous seamen at the Nore in 1797 to detain him in his cabin and oblige him to act as their delegate with demands to lay before the king.

Captain John Hamilton (d. 1755), whose elder brother and whose son were Earls of *Abercorn*, became a lieutenant in the navy in 1735–36, and served on various ships—along the southern coast of Ireland, for the most part—until 1755, when he was appointed to the *Lancaster*, in the Channel and the Bay of Biscay. On his return to Spithead in the first year of his new service, his ship struck on what has since been called Hamilton Shoal, and he went down with his crew. Charnock (*Biog. Nav.*, 5. 99) says, "He swam for a space of near twenty minutes; and while his strength of speech survived to him, continually exhorted his men to resignation, at the same time encouraging them to all possible exertion of their strength to save their lives." He was a severe critic of faults and abuses in the navy, even of the personnel and dress of the crews he was supplied with, but

National characters have been studiously displayed by many writers, and in general I believe with justice. The diversities of Swearing might be pointed out as corresponding with manners, so as to afford a good deal of entertainment. The Greeks swore strongly, if we may judge from the conversation of Socrates. We have not such good evidence of the swearing of the Romans. The oaths of modern nations will be found to be some of them shockingly impious, some diabolically malignant, and some extravagantly ridiculous. We have the peculiar oaths of some remarkable personages recorded. Those of our monarchs John and Charles II. are in every historian.<sup>18</sup>

Swearing is a crime which hurts the feelings of a pious man exceedingly. And for my own part, though I have no authority, I have frequently found it difficult to restrain myself from warmly reproving those who were guilty of it in my hearing. Nor can I absolutely consider as a madman a gallant, religious gentleman, who, if a story which I have read be true, called out a man for profaning the name of GOD in his presence, as an affront to himself directed against his greatest benefactor. I am sure there are few causes of single combat more rational, and none which would inspire the challenger with a higher courage. It is vain for any one to say that Swearing is so habitual to him that he is not sensible of it. Torpid as the most profane raver would represent himself, it is certain that he can, upon occasions, restrain his oaths. I knew an instance of a notorious swearer of high rank, whom a worthy magistrate with whom he was at dinner, warned that he was seriously determined to exact the statutory penalties. Not an oath was heard from him. Upon which, a lady who was present, and had often been shocked with his profanity, took the liberty to say to him, "Are you not ashamed of yourself?" A gentle admonition will sometimes have full effect. I remember being upon the walls at Chester when the present most amiable Bishop of that see,<sup>14</sup>

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the humor of his comments bears out Boswell's suggestion of his ability to manage men by intelligence rather than violence.

<sup>18</sup> King John swore by *God's teeth*, by *God's feet*, or by the light of *Our Lady's brow*; King Charles's favorite ejaculation was *Odd's fish*—a corruption of by *God's flesh*.

<sup>14</sup> Boswell is remembering his visit to Chester in 1779 with Colonel Stuart, when he made a study of the town with the Bishop's assistance, and was enter-

approached a young recruit who was cursing violently; and laying his hands upon him, said in a mild tone, "My friend, you will make as good a soldier, though you should not swear quite so much." The fellow had grace in him, pulled off his hat, bowed with profound respect, seemed out of countenance, and should hope<sup>15</sup> was a better man ever after.

There is a false notion of spirit and fashion annexed to Swearing by some people, which is apt to mislead the young into the practice of it. This should be carefully counteracted by rational counsel. To do the present age justice, there is much less Swearing amongst genteel people than in the last age, when it was certainly a very flagrant vice.<sup>16</sup>

*Farquhar*, whose comedies are, in my opinion, very lively pictures of the manners which he saw himself has in his *Love and a Bottle*, excellently ridiculed the affectation of Swearing, in order

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tained "morning, noon, and night" by his lordship, "who is one of the most distinguished prelates for piety and eloquence, and one of the most pleasing men in social life that you can imagine" (*Letters of B.*, 2. 293, 294, 300). This was Bishop Beilby Porteus (afterwards Bishop of London), born of parents native in Virginia, 1731; died 1808. He had been domestic chaplain to Archbishop Secker and to the king, becoming Bishop of Chester in 1776. He was an energetic reformer, giving his support to changes in the liturgy and the articles of the church, to the rising evangelical school among the clergy, and to the new scheme of Sunday schools. His greatest efforts, perhaps, were in the cause of anti-slavery, which he continued after becoming Bishop of London in 1787. For his collaboration with Dr. Stinton in editing the works of Secker, see n. 4 above; his own *Review of the Life and Character of Dr. Thomas Secker . . .* (1770) went through twelve editions.

Johnson also "always repressed obscenity and impiety" (*Life of J.*, 4. 341; see also 3. 47, 215).

<sup>15</sup> For this construction cf. *Hyp.* 65 n. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Boswelliana*, 314:

A fellow was swearing most terribly in a coffee-house. Colonel Forrester came up to him. "Pray, Sir," [sic] what entitles you to swear and blaspheme at this rate? "Eh, colonel," said he, "What! are you reproving me for it? I'm sure you used to swear as much as any man." "Yes sir," said he, "when it was the fashion. But now it is only practised by porters and chairmen. I left it off as below a gentleman."

Lord Chesterfield himself admits to his son, "I was even absurd enough, for a little while, to swear, by way of adorning and completing the shining character which I affected; but this folly I soon laid aside upon finding both the guilt and indecency of it" (*Letters*, 1. 49).

See also *The Spectator*, 371, where a host discomfits a table full of swearing

to appear a man of the world.<sup>17</sup> *Mockmode*, “a young ’squire, come newly from the university and setting up for a beau,” as he is announced by the authour in the *Dramatis Personæ*, according to the good old custom, is introduced getting instruction from *Rigàdoon*, his dancing-master, while *Club*, his servant, is by.

“*Mock*. By the universe, I have a great mind to bind myself ’prentice to a beau—Cou’d I but dance well, push well, play upon the flute, and swear the most modish oaths, I wou’d set up for quality with e’er a young nobleman of ’em all—Pray what are the most fashionable oaths in town? *Zoons*, I take it, is a very becoming one.

“*Rig*. *Zoons* is only us’d by the disbanded officers and bullies: but *Zauns* is the beau’s pronunciation.

“*Mock*. *Zauns*?

“*Club*. *Zauns*.

“*Mock*. *Zauns*, I must sneeze——(*sneezes*)——*Bless me*.

“*Rig*. O fie, Mr. *Mockmode*! what a rustical expression that is!—*Bless me*!—you should upon all such occasions cry *Dem me*. You would be as nauseous to the ladies as one of the old patriarchs, if you us’d that obsolete expression.

“*Club*. I find that going to the devil is very modish in this town.”

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guests by reading them their conversation as taken down by a servant behind a screen, and Swift’s *Thoughts on Various Subjects* (*Works*, 9. 230):

Harry Killebrew said to Lord Wharton, “You would not swear at that rate, if you thought you were doing God honour.”

<sup>17</sup> Boswell again quotes Farquhar with familiarity and pleasure in *Hebr.* 151; Johnson supported this good opinion (*Life of J.*, 4. 8) by the remark that Farquhar’s writings had “considerable merit.”

To balance the moral effect of Farquhar’s satire, consider Swift’s opinion of the theater as a “school of common swearing” (*Advice to a Young Poet*):

.... my young master, who at first but minced an oath, is taught there to mouth it gracefully, and to swear, as he reads French, *ore rotundo*. Profaneness was before to him in the nature of his best suit, or holiday-clothes; but, upon frequenting the playhouse, swearing, cursing, and lying, become like his every-day coat, waistcoat, and breeches. Now, I say, common swearing, a produce of this country as plentiful as our corn, thus cultivated by the playhouse, might, with management, be of wonderful advantage to the nation. ....

No. LXX. Aug. 1783.

## [ON CONCLUDING]

"Ἴθι δὴ πέραινε.—ARISTOPHANES.

"Come, now, conclude."<sup>1</sup>

TO RETIRE in proper time from any state of exertion is one of the most nice and difficult trials of human prudence and resolution. Every man of any classical education recollects the well known allusion to a horse growing aged, who ought no longer to be pushed on to the race lest he should be left behind breathless and contemptible.<sup>2</sup> But the misfortune is, that self-love deceives us exceedingly in the estimation of our mental abilities, so that we cannot be easily persuaded that they are in any degree decayed. Le Sage in his *Gil Blas* has given a just and diverting instance of this, in the old canon who was implacably offended at having a delicate hint suggested to him that he did not write so well as he had done in the vigour of life.<sup>3</sup>

My readers are now to be informed that this is the last essay of **THE HYPOCHONDRIACK**, a periodical paper, which I have published monthly for almost six years, and I flatter myself that my labours under that title shall not cease without some kindly sentiments of approbation in the breasts of those to whom they have afforded occasional entertainment.

<sup>1</sup> This essay was headed by a notice,

## FOR THE LONDON MAGAZINE

We are sorry to inform the public, that the ingenious correspondent, who has so long engaged the attention of our readers in **THE HYPOCHONDRIACK**, has closed his design in the following paper. But though we are no longer to be favoured with his communications under this title, we hope that we shall not be altogether deprived of his correspondence.

The quotation used as motto is from *The Frogs*—l. 1283. The magazine text omitted the accents from δὴ and πέραινε, and Boswell left no correction.

<sup>2</sup> An enlargement upon the lines of Ennius in which he compared himself to the champion of the races who deserves rest after a lifetime of accomplishment. The passage is quoted in Cicero's *De Senectute*, 5:

Sic ut fortis equus, spatio qui s<sup>æ</sup>pe supremo  
Vicit Olympia, nunc senio confectus quiescit.

<sup>3</sup> It was not a canon, but the Archbishop of Granada; the story occurs in *Gil Blas*, 7. 3 and 4.

It has been generally observed that we are sorry to part with one whom we have long known, provided he is not absolutely disagreeable to us. Upon this observation I found my hopes of being for a moment regretted by my readers; for a writer, though unknown, is always personified with sufficient distinctness by the imagination, so as to be the object of affection of one kind or other. I doubt if a writer has any such feeling towards those by whom he has been long known, but of whom he has no knowledge. His imagination does not settle upon any individuals of the number: but he has merely an idea of many in the abstract, which, although it may expand his pride or his ambition, cannot touch his heart. I, however, am conscious of a certain tenderness, while I am closing the scene of a species of literary existence, in which I own I have experienced sometimes anxiety, and sometimes self-complacency. This tenderness, it is plain from what I have said, is referable simply to my own mind. Yet it is an interesting fancy that there may be some of my readers so habituated to sympathize with the soul of the HYPOCHONDRIACK, that the instant of our being personally known to each other there would be a cordial friendship between us.<sup>4</sup>

But, there must not be too positive expectations entertained of finding a similarity between an author's conversation and his writ-

<sup>4</sup> Boswell's soul had felt this expansive sympathy for Rousseau's after he had read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, in his youth. See *Letters of B.*, I. 63, where Boswell confides notes upon his Zélide to Rousseau with the explanation, "Je pouvois vous confier tout au monde"; and *ibid.*, I. 59-60, where this ideal connection between writer and reader is at its most rarefied:

Je me présente, Monsieur, comme un homme d'une mérite singulierre, comme un homme qui a un cœur sensible, un esprit vif et mélancolique. Ah! si tout ce que j'ai souffert ne me donne pas une mérite singulierre auprès de Monsieur Rousseau, pourquoy ai-je été tellement créé? pourquoy a-t-il tellement écrit? ...

After a paragraph in which Boswell proves himself a sincere admirer of Rousseau by paraphrasing some of his best pyrotechnics in "virtue" and "sympathy" very neatly, the letter proceeds,

Vos écrits, Monsieur, m'ont attendri le cœur, m'ont élevé l'âme, m'ont allumé l'imagination. Croyez-moi, vous serez bien aise [sic] de me voir. ... Excusez-moi, Monsieur, je me sens ému. Je ne puis me retenir. O cher St. Preux! Mentor éclairé! éloquent et aimable Rousseau! J'ai un présentiment qu'une amitié bien noble va naître aujourd'hui. ... Je me trouve dans des circonstances sérieuses et délicates, sur lesquelles je souhaite ardemment d'avoir les conseils de l'auteur de la *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

It was no doubt this attitude which caused the cordiality between Boswell and Rousseau; the creator of St. Preux assured his enthusiastic reader that there were "des points où nos âmes sont liés" (*Letters of B.*, I. 67, 248).

ings. An author may have exhausted his mind into his works, so that nothing of any value remains for him to communicate. He may be able to collect and quicken his ideas in his closet, and have them dissipated, and as it were annihilated for a time, when in company. He may be an impostor, so as to have been assuming the appearance of virtuous or amiable qualities, which he no more possesses, than a player does many of the characters which he represents upon the stage with a vivacity of deception. For mimickry is indeed profound and universal, extending not only to manner, but to sentiment, and every part of mind, as is proved by the works of good dramatic writers, and I am sorry to add by the harangues of orators in different departments who ought to be in earnest. Indeed, there is nothing more delusive than the supposed character of an author, from reading his compositions.<sup>5</sup> There may be fine thoughts on the surface of a coarse mind, as beautiful flowers are found growing upon rocks, upon bogs, nay upon dunghills.<sup>6</sup> Besides the connection between authors and their

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Boswell's expansion of this notion in his preface to the *Account of Corsica* (1768), which he himself quotes later on as a note to the *Life of J.*, 2. 79:

He who publishes a book affecting not to be an authour, and professing an indifference for literary fame, may possibly impose upon many people such an idea of his consequence as he wishes may be received. For my part, I should be proud to be known as an authour, and I have an ardent ambition for literary fame; for, of all possessions, I should imagine literary fame to be the most valuable. A man who has been able to furnish a book, which has been approved by the world, has established himself as a respectable character in distant society, without any danger of having that character lessened by the observation of his weaknesses. To preserve an uniform dignity among those who see us every day is hardly possible: and to aim at it, must put us under the fetters of perpetual restraint. The authour of an approved book may allow his natural disposition an easy play, and yet indulge the pride of superior genius, when he considers that by those who know him only as an authour, he never ceases to be respected. Such an authour, when in his hours of gloom and discontent, may have the consolation to think, that his writings are, at that very time, giving pleasure to numbers; and such an authour may cherish the hope of being remembered after death, which has been a great object to the noblest minds in all ages.

Johnson also maintained that the "best part of every author is in general to be found in his book" (*Life of J.*, 1. 521 n. 1). In *The Rambler*, 14, the "manifest and striking contrariety between the life of an author and his writings" is said to be one of "many inconsistencies which folly produces, or infirmity suffers in the human mind."

<sup>6</sup> Almost exactly the wording of a letter from Boswell to Johnson in 1777 (*Letters of B.*, 1. 262)—

Thomson was a much coarser man than his friends are willing to acknowledge. His *Seasons* are indeed full of elegant and pious sentiments; but a rank soil, nay a dunghill, will produce beautiful flowers.

works is very different in different persons. Their works may be compared to their clothes. Some wear them tight and stiff, some quite easy; and to some their works are like robes, which they put on only upon solemn occasions, and never wear in their common course of life. Of these varieties I have seen many examples, and could name several now alive, were it proper so to do it.

For myself, I cannot perfectly judge of my manner, which I have no doubt must vary with the fluctuation of my spirits. Nor can I boast that my practice is uniformly what it should be. But I am absolutely certain that in these papers my principles are most sincerely expressed.<sup>7</sup> I can truly say in the words of Pope,

“I love to pour out all myself as plain,  
“As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne.”

Perhaps, indeed, I have poured out myself with more freedom than prudence will approve, and I am aware of being too much an egotist. But I trust that my readers will be generous enough not to take advantage of my openness and confidence, but rather treat me with a liberal indulgence.<sup>8</sup>

Yet let it not be understood that I supplicate favour with an abject timidity. For I am not afraid of a fair trial by impartial judges. This comfort I have, that my intentions have all along

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 54 and notes.

<sup>8</sup> The quotation from Pope (*Sat.*, 1. 52) is presented again in a letter from Boswell to Temple in 1775 (*Letters of B.*, 1. 214). For Boswell's disillusionment in regard to the indulgence of his readers, see his dedication of the *Life of Johnson* to Sir Joshua Reynolds, where he complains that the reception of his candid *Tour to the Hebrides* (published two years after this final number of *The Hypochondriack*) caused him to use greater discretion in preparing his material for the *Life*:

In one respect, this Work will, in some passages, be different from the former. In my *Tour*, I was almost unboundedly open in my communications, and from my eagerness to display the wonderful fertility and readiness of Johnson's wit, freely shewed to the world its dexterity, even when I was myself the object of it. I trusted that I should be liberally understood, as knowing very well what I was about, and by no means as simply unconscious of the pointed effects of the satire. I own, indeed, that I was arrogant enough to suppose that the tenour of the rest of the book would sufficiently guard me against such a strange imputation. But it seems I judged too well of the world; for, though I could scarcely believe it, I have been undoubtedly informed, that many persons, especially in distant quarters, not penetrating enough into Johnson's character, so as to understand his mode of treating his friends, have arraigned my judgement, instead of seeing that I was sensible of all that they could observe. . . . I have, therefore, in this Work been more reserved; and though I tell nothing but the truth, I have still kept in my mind that the whole truth is not always to be exposed.

been good, and that I cannot be condemned for having failed in my undertaking; because I undertook nothing determinate, but only to give a series of essays, which I have accordingly done. I perceive they are not so lively as I expected they would be. But they are more learned. And I beg I may not be charged with excessive arrogance, when I venture to say that they contain a considerable portion of original thinking. Be what they may, I should not have written them had I not been urged on by the obligation of a monthly task which I imposed upon myself. For except the first number, and the four which I mention as written several years ago, all of them were composed while the hour of publication was so near, that I had just time enough to do them with rapid agitation.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes I had a few notes for a subject; sometimes not; and often have I wondered when I found my pages filled. Hurry has been upon many occasions pleaded as an excuse for the imperfections of a writer. The Hypochondriack has, besides, to plead what is peculiar to his own cast of mind, a hurry of spirits.<sup>10</sup>

There is a pleasure, when one is indolent, to think that a task, to the performance of which one has been again and again subjected, and had some difficulty to make it out, is no longer to be required. But this pleasure, or rather comfort, does not last. For we soon feel a degree of uneasy languor, not merely in being without a stated exercise, but in being void of the usual consciousness of its regular returns, by which the mind has been agreeably braced.<sup>11</sup>

A conclusion, however, should be put to a periodical paper, before its numbers have encreased so much as to make it heavy and disgusting were it even of excellent composition, and this consideration is more necessary when it is entirely the work of one

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<sup>9</sup> Both of Boswell's model writers turned out their essays the same way: for the haste with which *The Rambler* was written, see *Life of J.*, 1. 236; 3. 49; for that of *The Spectator*, many numbers of which "were written very fast, and sent immediately to the press," see Johnson's citation from Spence, in his *Life of Addison*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 4, 23, 25, 26, 37, and notes.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Hyp.* 4, 6, 25, 39 and *Life of J.*, 3. 226, for the dreaded languor of hypochondria.

person, which in my first number I declared the Hypochondriack should be. I have resolved to end with number seventieth, from perhaps a whimsical regard to a number by which several interesting particulars are marked, the most interesting of which is the solemn reflection that "the days of our years are threescore years and ten."<sup>12</sup> To chuse one number rather than another, where all numbers are rationally indifferent, there must be a motive, however slight. Such is my motive for fixing on Number Seventieth. It may be said, I need not to have told it.

Let me then have done, and bid my readers farewell with a good grace, instead of lingering on the verge of my departure. I know there is sometimes a good deal of hesitation in leaving a room filled with company whom we respect, and a man often sits long, from irresolution to rise and make a handsome bow, while retreating, which is one of the most exquisite lessons of the Marseilles of every age. But this need not disconcert us who are not of great consequence, and therefore not much the object of attention. But a certain degree of presence of mind is required to be convinced that one is not of great consequence,<sup>13</sup> the idea of which produces that bashfulness which the French very well express by the phrase *mauvaise honte*. Frequently has it happened that when a man has thought every body was gazing upon him, and has slyly stolen a look, he has perceived not an eye directed his way.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Psalms*, 90. 10. Boswell reckons his middle age by this computation in *Hyp.* 9.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Boswell's somewhat extended argument in the *Life of Johnson* (3. 186—quoted under *Hyp.* 65), to convince himself that the life of no particular individual can be of great importance. See also his pathetic letter to Temple in 1780 regretting his lack of consequence; it is noticeable that he refers to his *Hypochondriack* without, apparently, any assured belief that it will remove the lack of esteem. The nervous modesty of the concluding paragraph of the essays seems to me closely parallel to the tone of the letter (*Letters of B.*, 2. 301):

I wish I could give you any satisfactory account of my studies. . . . I really think my *Hypochondriack* goes on wonderfully well. But how inconsiderable are both you and I in comparison with what we used to hope we should be. Yet your learning, and your *Memoirs* set you far above the common run of educated men. And *son pittore anche io*. I, too, in several respects have attained to superiority. But we both want solidity and force of mind, such as we observe in those who rise in active life.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lord Chesterfield's warnings against this species of awkwardness in the *Letters to his Son*, I. 14.

The mode of publication in which THE HYPOCHONDRIACK hath as yet appeared prevents him from knowing what has been the opinion which his readers have formed of his essays. He has only to add with his last breath in this character, that he knows he shall view these papers with relish or dissatisfaction, in different states of his mind. But, at all times he shall rejoice, if he is assured that his writings have in any degree contributed to the relief of the unhappy.

THE END

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Long subdivisions are condensed by the use of italics for the keyword or words and a two-em dash in place of the repetition of the keyword.

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